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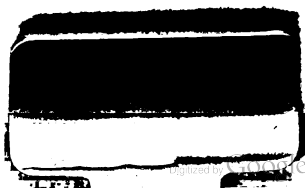
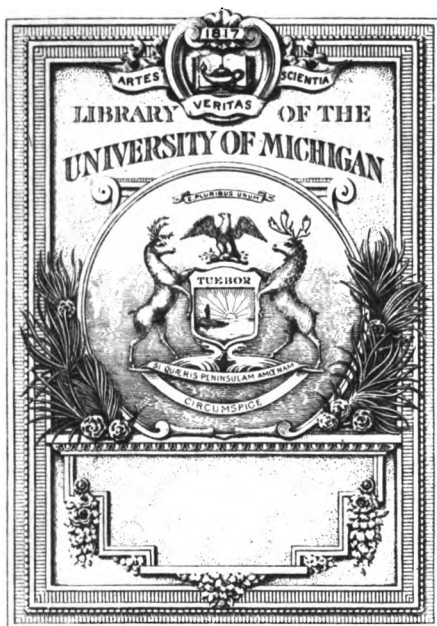
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# ÆSCHYLUS.

TRANSLATED BY

THE REV. R. POTTER, M.A.,

PREBENDARY OF NORWICH.

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# **ÆSCHYLUS.**

TRANSLATED BY

**THE REV. R. POTTER, M.A.,**  
**PREBENDARY OF NORWICH.**

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[The Editor has gladly availed himself of the kind permission of Mr. HARFORD to reprint, and adapt for the English reader, by the omission of various Greek extracts and references, a portion of the learned Essay prefixed to his admirable translation of the *Agamemnon*,\* which has been recently published by Mr. Murray in one volume octavo, with beautiful classical embellishments. For an interesting disquisition on the state of the Grecian drama and the fine arts in the age of Pericles, we must refer the scholar to the work itself, which will amply repay his perusal.]

\* The *Agamemnon* of *Æschylus*, translated from the Greek, illustrated by a Dissertation on Grecian Tragedy &c. by JOHN S. HARFORD, Esq., D.C.L. F.R.S.

**ESSAY**  
**ON THE**  
**GRECIAN DRAMA,**  
**&c. &c.**  
**INCLUDING A**  
**BIOGRAPHICAL MEMOIR OF ÆSCHYLUS.**

---

THE series of compositions included within the range of Grecian tragedy, form one of the most delightful walks in the enchanted gardens of classical literature ; and, at the same time that they present models of genuine pathos and of fine writing, they reflect important light on the superstitions, the prejudices, and the moral feelings of the Greeks.

Tragedy, at its first and original outset, corresponded in no degree with the idea which the word suggests to a modern ear, for it included nothing truly dramatic. Its earliest form of celebration was confined to the simple object of singing choral odes, accompanied by music and dancing, at festi-

vals in honour of Bacchus, at the conclusion of the vintage. This custom was not confined to the rites of Bacchus, but was an expression of festal gladness attendant on many of the religious ceremonies of the Greeks. As poetic contests on such occasions were not unusual, it is probable they might frequently, if not periodically, occur at the Dionysian festival; and that the custom of competing for a prize might thus, together with the chorus, have engrafted itself on tragedy.

There is reason to suppose that at these festivals recitations took place of odes very opposite in their character: the one, grave and lofty, whence tragedy originated; the other, of a licentious and buffo description, which formed the germ of comedy. In all countries where the worship of Bacchus prevailed, it was strongly tinctured by that spirit of licentiousness and sensuality which more or less disgraced the rites of paganism; and in this respect the refined Greeks differed little from neighbouring and less polished nations. The sacrifice of a goat to Bacchus, which formed a part of the ceremonial, is said to have given birth to the term "tragedy," *τραγῳδία*, signifying the goat-song.

Thespis, of whom we know little more than the name, and who flourished in the age of Solon, added to the interest created by the choral songs and dances by introducing an actor, whose office it was to recite, during the pauses of the chorus, verses in honour of any favourite hero, or in celebration of some popular or ludicrous incident. The face of the actor was bedaubed with wine-lees, and the

simple paraphernalia necessary to the exhibition were conveyed in a wagon : much, we presume, after the fashion of the vagrant showmen who are in the habit of frequenting our public fairs.

*Ignotum Tragicæ genus invenisse Camœnæ  
Dicitur, et plaustris vexisse poemata Thespis  
Quæ canerent, agerentque peruncti sæcibus ora.*

HOR. ART. POET. 279.

*Thespis, inventor of the tragic art,  
Carried his vagrant players in a cart :  
High o'er the crowd the mimic tribe appear'd,  
And play'd and sung, with lees of wine besmear'd.*

FRANCIS.

Clemens Alexandrinus and Plutarch have introduced quotations in their works from tragedies ascribed to Thespis ; but Bentley, the most learned as well as most acute of modern critics, has proved, almost to demonstration, that these were forgeries by Heraclides, and that no written drama of Thespis ever existed. The same eminent critic cites the authority of the Arundel marble, to prove that the 61st Olympiad, B. C. 536, was the date of the first exhibitions of Thespis ; so that there could only have been about two generations between him and the battle of Marathon.

Phrynichus is mentioned as a scholar and successor of Thespis ; and from the effects ascribed by Herodotus to one of his tragedies, the subject of which was the capture of Miletus by the Persians, it would appear that he was a poet of no ordinary powers. So deeply affected, says the historian, was the auditory by the representation, that they burst into tears : but the poet, he adds, was fined



a thousand drachmæ, for thus vividly reminding them of a domestic calamity, and the repetition of the piece was forbidden. To forbid the repetition of the piece might be sound policy; but to punish the poet for thus drawing from the eyes and hearts of the spectators the noblest homage to its power which genius can command or desire, appears a severe enactment, especially on the very soil of taste and poetry. He was, in fact, achieving the triumph which Horace has described as the climax of the poetic art. There is no reason to suppose that Phrynichus materially advanced the art, or structure of tragedy, beyond the point at which it was left by Thespis.

On this simple basis, and with these imperfect materials, Æschylus conceived and framed the regular drama,—such, in the main, as it is found in the works of the greatest poets, who have acquired in this career the highest reputation. He has therefore been justly hailed, by succeeding ages, the father of tragic, as Homer of epic song.

Time has spared but very scanty particulars of his life; yet, such as they are, the record of them will afford the best opportunity of detailing the special nature of the improvements which he introduced into the tragic art, as well as the peculiarities of his own genius.

Eleusis in Attica gave birth to Æschylus; according to Stanley, in the 63d Olympiad, or about 525 years B. C. His family was noble, and highly distinguished in many of its branches by the lustre

of superior talents, and by eminent services rendered to their country. A traditionary tale, recorded by Pausanias, asserts, that when a boy he dreamt that Bacchus appeared to him while he kept guard in a vineyard, and exhorted him to devote his talents to tragic composition. Youthful enthusiasm is prolific of such forms

as wove in fancy's loom,  
Float in light vision round the poet's head.

There is therefore nothing improbable in the story. According to Suidas, he contended for, and won the tragic prize in his twenty-fifth year, in competition with Pratinas and Chærilus; but it is doubtful whether, at this early period, he had shaken off the trammels of the Thespian school.\* Pratinas was the inventor of the satiric drama; a species of burlesque tragedy, to which the Athenians were extremely partial, and of which a specimen is preserved in the Cyclops of Euripides.

The next mention of the poet is in the career of arms. He fought at Marathon under Miltiades in his thirty-fifth year, and so highly distinguished himself, as to be one of those to whom the prize of peculiar valour was assigned, after the termination of that conflict so glorious to liberty and to Athens. Two of his brothers, Cynægirus and Ameinias, whose bravery had been equally conspicuous, received the

\* That the grand improvements introduced by Æschylus are to be referred to a later period, is rendered the more probable from the assertion of Aristotle, that it was *long* before tragedy rejected the trochaic tetrameter, and assumed the more dignified yet colloquial iambic, in the structure of its dialogue.

same honourable distinction. He no less signalized himself in the naval action of Salamis, and in the decisive battle of Platæa. In the former of these conflicts, his brother Ameinias is said to have acquired peculiar glory, by sinking the vessel of the Persian admiral.

The era which followed the defeat of Xerxes has already been designated as the brightest in the annals of Athens. Placed at the head of the Grecian confederacy by her valour and her policy, the neighbouring maritime states became in general either her tributaries or dependants; an enlarged commerce followed, with wealth and leisure in its train; the useful and elegant arts, and the severer sciences were assiduously cultivated; and Athens rose again out of the Persian ashes, at once the eye and the ornament of Greece. It was at this period that Æschylus attained the summit of poetical reputation; and the tragic contest became, under his auspices, the favourite popular amusement of the Athenians. What he achieved has deservedly enrolled his name among the illustrious few to whom the highest honours of genius are assigned. He invented all those prominent attributes in the structure, the spirit, and accompaniments of tragedy, which have raised it, by the suffrages of the greatest critics, to a rank among the various productions of poetry, second only in dignity to the epopee. He not only succeeded in acting on the feelings, and touching the passions of his auditory by means and for ends consistent with virtue and propriety, but he represented the very objects that he described; he

invested them with suitable forms, and placed them in such a manner before the spectators as should realize to their imaginations the images which tradition suggested of the heroes, the sages, and the deities of Grecian tradition or mythology.

Out of upwards of seventy tragedies which he composed, seven only have survived the ravages of time; so that our actual means of judging of the extent of his poetical powers are extremely limited. Among these, however, are some,—the Agamemnon, the Seven Chiefs, and the Prometheus,—that as long as they exist, will never cease to class among the finest productions of human genius. The strength and energy of fancy with which he conceived his subjects are obvious throughout these dramas. Homer himself has not more strongly individualized his Hector, his Ajax, his Achilles, than Æschylus his Agamemnon, his Clytemnestra, his Prometheus. The lyrical inspiration of his choruses often approaches the sublime of Pindar; and the Greek language, nervous, comprehensive, and subtle as it is, can scarcely give full expression to the compass and energy of his thoughts and images. In pouring forth the ardent emotions of his mind, recital and narrative are often suddenly converted into picturesque delineation or bold personification. Perhaps there is no poet, ancient or modern, Shakespeare and Milton alone excepted, from whose writings more striking instances might be cited of what Horace acutely styles “*disjecti membræ poetæ*,” that is to say, the shreds of sentences, so finely expressed as to be themselves poetry. The “vermeil

tinctured lip," the "tresses like the morn," of Milton — "the spirit-stirring drum," "the eye-trained bird," "the tender leaves of hope," of Shakspeare, are instances of this description ; and may be contrasted with the *μαλθακὸν ὀμμάτων βίλος*, the *δηξίθυμοι ἔρωτος ἄνθος*, the *δορυτίνακτος αἰθήρ ἐπιμαίνεται* of Æschylus :

Thoughts that breathe, and words that burn.

Though Quintilian has dismissed Æschylus with too slight a notice, the general suffrage of antiquity ascribed to him the highest powers of creative genius. What Aristophanes says of him shall hereafter be cited. Longinus praises in strong terms the magnificence of his imagery ; and quotes, as an instance, the well-known description of the sacrifice at the commencement of the "Seven Chiefs." The testimony of Dionysius Halicarnassensis is as follows : "Æschylus peculiarly excelled in loftiness of thought, and in a just conception of what constitutes dignity in the delineation of the passions and manners. His style is wonderfully adorned by figurative and impressive language ; and he is very skilful in the invention of words and circumstances adapted to his particular purposes."

The judgment of the moderns respecting him is precisely similar. To use the language of a great poet and able critic,\* "At his summons, the mysterious and tremendous volume of destiny, in which are inscribed the doom of gods and men, seemed to

\* Sir Walter Scott's *Essay on the Drama*.

display its leaves of iron before the appalled spectators ; the more than mortal voices of deities, Titans, and departed heroes, were heard in awful conference ; Olympus bowed, and its deities descended ; earth yawied, and gave up the pale spectres of the dead, and the yet more undefined and grisly forms of those infernal deities who struck horror into the gods themselves. All this could only be dared and done by a poet of the highest order ; confident, during that early age of enthusiasm, that he addressed an audience prompt to kindle at the heroic scene which he placed before them. It followed almost naturally, from his character, that the dramas of Æschylus, though full of terrible interest, should be deficient in grace and softness ; that his sublime conciseness should deviate sometimes into harshness and obscurity ; and that his plots should appear rude and inartificial contrasted with those of his successors in the dramatic art. Still, however, Æschylus led not only the way in the noble career of the Grecian drama, but outstripped, in point of sublimity at least, those by whom he was followed."

The term "theatre" suggests to a modern ear the idea of a building devoted to nocturnal amusement, blazing with the splendour of innumerable lights, and replete with objects of the highest excitement. These ideas must either be dismissed or modified, in order to form a just notion of the theatres of the Greeks. They were open to the skies ; the representations took place in broad daylight ; and, from considerations of propriety, no female actors were

allowed. Occasional annoyance must have been experienced from sudden changes of the weather, or from radiant sunshine ; but these were possibly guarded against by contrivances which are not mentioned, or an occasional interruption was deemed by the spectators of little moment, in comparison of the general delight of inhaling the pure air, and being fanned by the soft breezes of their delicious climate. Again, the modern theatre is a scene solely devoted to pleasure ; nobody goes there with the idea of receiving positive instruction : but tragic representation among the Greeks was a species of religious ceremonial, and, as compared with that of later times, might almost be termed a school of divinity. It commenced with sacrifice, and the professed aim of its poets was to render amusement subordinate to moral instruction. Aristotle expressly contends for this principle ; and Æschylus is made, by Aristophanes, to rebuke Euripides severely for its occasional violation.

We will say nothing in this place about the errors of heathen morality, or the grossness of heathen superstition, even in their best forms. We only assert the fact, that the aim was thus noble, however imperfect the execution. Hence Milton, who, with the exception of the finer tragedies of Shakspeare,\* justly regarded the modern, in its moral character, as a degenerated scion of the an-

\* After alluding, in *Il Penseroso*, to the pensive grandeur of ancient tragedy, he adds,

And what, *though rare*, of later age,  
Ennobled hath the buskin'd stage.

cient drama, thus expresses himself with regard to the Greek school :—

“ Tragedy, as it was anciently composed, hath been ever held the gravest, moralest, and most profitable of all other poems ; therefore said by Aristotle to be of power, by raising pity and fear, or terror, to purge the mind of these and such like passions ; that is, to temper and reduce them to just measure, with a kind of delight, stirred up by reading or seeing those passions well imitated. Hence philosophers, and other gravest writers, as Cicero, Plutarch, and others, frequently cite out of tragic poets, both to adorn and illustrate their discourse. This is mentioned to vindicate tragedy from the small esteem, or rather infamy, which, in the account of many, it undergoes at this day, with other common interludes.”

Milton, in composing tragedy, strictly adhered to the ancient models ; and the *Samson Agonistes*, though defective in dramatic action, is a noble monument of his successful rivalry of their style and spirit.

Tragedy, under Thespis, it has already been said, was nothing more than the recitation, by a single actor, of the exploits or adventures of some real or fabulous hero or heroes, which relieved, at intervals, the monotony of the chorus. By the introduction of two, and, occasionally, of more persons of the drama,\* and by assigning to each a distinct part,

\* It has been a favourite hypothesis with writers on the ancient drama, that Sophocles was the first person who introduced a third actor. But a little reflection on the incidents of the



Æschylus gave the representation of a varied and continuous action, accompanied by all the animation of dialogue, and excitive of those peculiar emotions which the semblance of reality produces on the imagination. The illusion of appropriate, though not moveable scenery was added, in giving effect to which the poet availed himself of the assistance of distinguished artists. In this particular Sophocles, according to Aristotle, greatly improved on the inventions of his predecessor, yet it is obvious that the machinery necessary to give effect to some of the scenes in the existing dramas of Æschylus required no ordinary degree of ingenuity and invention. The Prometheus, for example, demanded considerable exertion, both of pictorial and mechanical skill. The eye of the spectator was to rest on the scenery of a savage and rocky eminence on the bosom of the trackless deep, to which the giant rebel was chained: the chorus of sea-nymphs, who visit and condole with him, were introduced as if wafted in a winged chariot; and old Oceanus, who followed them, made his *entrée* on what seemed a flying steed, or, as the scholiast will have it, a griffin. These particulars are not merely to be inferred from the

Agamemnon renders it next to certain that three, at least, were occasionally resorted to by Æschylus. How could it be other wise, for instance, where Agamemnon presents Cassandra to Clytemnestra, and commends her to her kindness? On this point the authority of Bentley may be regarded as conclusive. "Æschylus," he says, "is generally reported as the inventor of the second actor; and yet several believed that afterward he invented, too, the third actor; for, in the making of seventy-five tragedies, he had time enough to improve further on his first model."—*Bentley's Phalaris*, p. 240.

incidents of the piece, but are confirmed by the authority of Aristophanes ; who alludes in the *Frogs*, with much humour, to the introduction, by Æschylus, of these and similar mysterious beings in his dramas. Agatharcus, a painter, is mentioned by Vitruvius as having rendered the poet important aid in these contrivances.

The ancient tragedies were not thus usually fraught with the marvellous, and the requisite scenery was extremely simple. The outside of a temple, a mansion, or a palace, or the interior court of either, sufficed for the greater part of the incidents introduced into these compositions. The privacy in which the Greek women lived, forbade the representation of the interior apartments of houses, and thus excluded from the ancient drama those scenes of amatory intrigue which supply the modern stage with so much dangerous, and often pernicious excitement.

Much taste was displayed by Æschylus in the drapery of his performers ; which, according to Athenæus, was arranged with such elegance, and at the same time with such attention to propriety, as to have furnished models for improving the habits of the ministers of religion. Vulgarly and grossness had probably marked their gait and attire under Thespis. Horace alludes to this reform, and to the general dignity now impressed on tragedy :—

Post hunc personæ, pallæque repertor honestæ,  
Æschylus, et modicis instravit pulpita tignis  
Et docuit magnumque loqui, nitique cothurno.

Then Æschylus a decent vizard used ;  
Built a low stage ; the flowing robe diffused :  
In language more sublime his actors rage,  
And in the graceful buskin tread the stage.

FRANCIS.

The costume of the deities whom he introduced was conformed either to some conventional mode or was borrowed from that of the most decorous and appropriate of their respective statues. If actors were elevated much above the natural stature by lofty buskins, and they wore sculptured painted masks, adapted to the characters whom they represented. These were probably a little rude in their execution in the first instance, but they acquired, as the fine arts advanced toward perfection, a high degree of finish and expression. They were shifted as the progress of the action required a change of expression, and they were so constructed as to aid the powers of the voice. Many imitations of these masks exist in collection of ancient sculpture and painting, and justify the opinion that the talents of the first artists of Athens were employed to give to the originals the most exquisite traits of feature and character. The use of such an expedient can only be accounted for, or defended, by a reference to the customs of the Greeks, and to the magnitude of their theatres. It has already been stated, that no female performers were allowed on the stage of Greece, consequently feminine beauty, grace, and dignity, could only be imitated by the use of masks.

From the vast circumference of their theatres, the majority of the spectators were placed at such

a distance from the stage, that few would have been able to trace the varying expression of impassioned sentiment or feeling in the countenances of the performers themselves, whereas the strong relief of the mask conveyed the ideal semblance of each distinct personage ; a circumstance which afforded a latitude and power to the dramatic art far more extended than if the same individual face had been employed to represent a great variety of characters and emotions. The delusion of the masks and of the scene was also heightened from the distance whence they were surveyed. The general aim was, that the actors, by appropriate beauty of drapery or armour, by dignity or grace of form and manner, and by lofty declamation, should communicate to the spectators the same sentiment of ideal grandeur, which so peculiarly pervades the language and the incidents of Grecian tragedy, and thus realize to them in every way the images which fancy suggested of the heroic ages. To this end, mechanical means were employed to diffuse or circumscribe the light, at pleasure, over the stage and the orchestra, as the blaze of broad daylight, by robbing the artificial appendages of all mystery, and bringing them into too close a comparison with the truth of nature, would have been fatal to their effect. The actors, thus circumstanced, must have appeared, throughout the changing scenes, like so many successive groups of animated and breathing sculpture ; an art with which, as it existed in the age of Pericles, Grecian tragedy has often and justly been compared.

The first theatre at Athens was a rude fabric of

wood, and was burnt down in the time of Praxinos, already alluded to as the inventor of the satiric drama. The succeeding building was probably erected under the auspices of Æschylus, and adapted to his improvements and inventions in the tragic art: but it was either totally rebuilt or greatly enlarged by Pericles, when it assumed, it is supposed, a magnificence adapted to that age of luxury and embellishment. The general form, and some portions of the masonry of this fabric, are still discoverable at Athens, and bear the appellation of the theatre of Bacchus. In it the *chef-d'œuvre* of Sophocles and Euripides were represented. A passage from the Symposium of Plato has frequently been cited, to prove that its dimensions were so vast as to be capable of accommodating more than thirty thousand spectators; but there is good reason to regard this assertion as hyperbolical. The mode, in fact, of its introduction, in no degree entitles it to be regarded as an historical statement. Agathos, one of the guests supposed to be present at the Symposium, had recently obtained the tragic garland, and to him Socrates addresses the flattering remark, that his fame had been brilliantly displayed on that occasion in the presence of more than thirty thousand of the Greeks. As the charm of the compliment would obviously be heightened by an exaggeration of the numbers, the philosopher may naturally be conjectured to have spoken largely; but this supposition is rendered almost matter of fact by the result of scientific modern measurements of the remains of the principal Greek theatres; for

the most capacious among them, which appear to have equalled in dimensions that of Athens, could not have contained, even when crowded, more than *twenty* thousand spectators.\*

The beautiful situation occupied by the remains of many of the ancient theatres justifies the supposition that they were studiously placed so as to command, and to incorporate with their own architectural features, the finest objects of the adjacent country. The majestic mountains and luxuriant plains, the groves and gardens, the land-locked and open sea in the neighbourhood of many of the principal cities of Greece, presented the finest materials which taste could suggest or desire for such combinations. But the charm of southern landscape depends not solely on the romantic or beautiful features which enter into its composition. In that land of the sun, the purity of the atmosphere, the rich and magical hues of colour, the soft loveliness of the aerial perspective, the powerful relief of light and shadow, produce on the senses, while contemplating the beauties of nature, impressions of pleasure rarely equalled even on our finest days in these northern regions.

Where'er we gaze, around, above, below,  
What rainbow tints, what magic charms are found,  
Rocks, river, forest, mountain all abound!  
And bluest skies to harmonize the whole.

CHILDE HAROLD.

---

\* Mr. Cockerell is the author's authority for the above statement.

Select portions of landscapes thus composed coloured, viewed through the openings of a architectural building, must have feasted the with living pictures of exquisite grace and beauty. The theatre of Taurominium, in Sicily, was placed that the audience had a fine view of *Æ* in the background of the distance. That of Athens comprehended the various declivities of Mount Hymettus, and overlooked the Saronic Gulf, and the emporium of Piræus, with its three ports. Above it towered the Acropolis, crowned by the majestic Parthenon. In point of situation, therefore, it must have been perfect; and in beauty, is said by Dicæarchus,\* a writer of the age of Demetrius Phalereus, or about 310 B. C., to have transcended all similar buildings.

In shape, the ancient theatres were not unlike that of a horseshoe. The seats of the spectators consisted of steps, ranging one above another round the segment of nearly three-fourths of a circle, which this shape supposes. The lower seats belonged to persons of quality and to magistrates; the middle to the commonalty, and the upper arcades said to have been appropriated to females.† It has, however, been questioned whether they frequented the theatre. That they did not attend

\* Leake's Athens, p. 58. The same learned writer has given an engraving of an ancient Athenian coin which illustrates the above particulars. It represents the great Athenian theatre viewed from below. Above it rises the wall of the Acropolis, over the centre of which towers the Parthenon, and to the left is the Propylæa.

† Potter's Archæologia, vol. i. p. 42.

comic spectacles in the time of Aristophanes, Schlegel has pretty clearly proved; but that they were present at tragedies is now generally admitted. Scalæ, or flights of steps, diverging in equidistant radii from the bottom to the top, formed the communications with the seats. What is called in modern theatres the pit, was termed the orchestra, though relatively much contracted, and was occupied by the chorus, a band of performers whose function it was to recite or sing the lyrical compositions or odes which occurred between the different acts of the piece. In the centre of the orchestra, and on a level with the stage, was an altar, called Thymele, on which sacrifice was offered before the tragic contests commenced: there were steps round it, on which the chorus stood when they joined in the dialogue of the actors.

Though there is great difficulty in reconciling and in reducing to clearness many of the assertions of Julius Pollux, Vitruvius, and other ancient authors, respecting the parts which composed the scene and the stage of the Greek theatre, it is hoped that the following statement may reflect some light on this subject, so interesting to classical scholars, and which has been so much agitated by antiquaries.

The scene, Σκηνή, was a solid architectural building of considerable elevation, presenting a highly ornamental *façade*, with three principal and two minor gateways. It was often decorated with costly columns and statues; and to it were suspended such painted and moveable scenes as the



piece to be represented might require. In front of the permanent stage, a portion of which was covered by a temporary roof or awning, which served to conceal the mechanism of the scene and to suspend the *αὐλαία*, or curtain. This was termed the *proscenium*. The stage on which actors stood, called *λογεῖον*, and in Latin *pulpitum*, occupied the width of the orchestra, and was placed in front of the permanent stage. Its shape varied according to the purposes of the representation, and it was moveable.

Vitruvius has described, with much detail, vases of brass, and sometimes of pottery, placed under the seats or precincts of the theatre to promote the transmission of sound : it may be inferred from his description that the aid they rendered was important ; but this portion of his work has never been sufficiently understood to allow of its application to the construction of any modern buildings ; no theatres, except at Scythopolis in Syria, have the smallest traces of them been found in the remains of ancient theatres. If the facts he states are authentic, it must follow that the moderns are much behind the ancients in the science of acoustics.

The ancient theatres were not only used for scenical representations, but for contests in music and in other departments of genius or of skill. Various festivals, and not unfrequently political assemblies, were also held in them. That of Megalopolis is supposed to have been constructed of larger dimensions than would otherwise have been requisite, in order to accommodate the great Arca-

dian council.\* At Athens, the assemblies of the people were originally held in the Pnyx, a place of concourse venerable from its antiquity, and interesting from its associations with the noblest recollections of her history. But towards the close of the Peloponnesian war they more frequently took place in the theatre of Bacchus. In the age of Philip and Alexander, the custom had become frequent at Athens of honouring with a crown of gold any citizen who had rendered signal services to his country; and on such occasions proclamation was made in the theatre during the grand festival of Bacchus, when the new tragedies were exhibited, and the throng of strangers as well as of citizens was great, of the name and merits of the individual thus highly honoured. The rival orations of Demosthenes, and Æschines de Coronâ, are fraught with allusions to the custom.

Æschylus not unfrequently acted a part in his own dramas, and animated the performers by his example and instructions. He skilfully adapted the embellishments of the chorus to the incidents of the piece, though in this respect he sometimes overstepped, through the fervour of his fancy, the bounds of propriety. An example of this description occurred, it is said, at the representation of the Eumenides, a drama still extant, in which Orestes, after taking vengeance on his mother for the murder of his father, is represented as haunted and pursued by the Furies. These infernal deities were intro-

\* Leake's *Morea*, vol. ii. 40.

duced on the stage, their hair braided with serpents, and torches and other emblems of terror in their hands, and accompanied by a numerous train of kindred attendants, when the effects produced by fear were such, that the magistrates interfered, and restricted, by a legislative enactment, the number of the chorus to thirty. It was afterward reduced to fifteen. An extravagance, akin to that which has just been noticed, occasionally marked the action of his dramas. He has been ridiculed by Aristophanes for placing and retaining on the stage through the successive periods of a long action mute personages, who, after sustaining this part towards the close, broke forth into one or two powerful exclamations, and then disappeared. The death of Achilles, after the death of Patroclus, and Niobe after that of her daughters, were introduced in the action of his tragedies, with their heads veiled, and fixed in speechless grief till the conclusion of the drama.

Whether the dialogue of tragedy was delivered in a tone of appropriate declamation, or in a style of impressive recitative, regulated by an accompaniment of the flute or pipe, has been a subject of much learned discussion. It is clear, from the testimony of Horace, that the colloquy of Roman tragedy proceeded in the latter way; and Burney in his History of Music, has adduced various passages from Aristotle and Plutarch, to prove the same of that of Greece. Schlegel, on the other hand, opposes the inferences drawn from those passages. They are, in fact, of very ambiguous import.

port ; and, at the utmost, afford nothing beyond a plausible colouring to the hypothesis. The colloquial, though dignified style of the Grecian drama ; its fidelity to nature ; its simplicity and pathos,—appear directly opposed to the supposition of a highly artificial mode of delivery : yet a measured and impressive recitation, and an elevated tone of voice, must have been essential to the due transmission of sound over a vast area ; and some slight musical accompaniment, to regulate the pitch of the voice, would not be at variance with an easy yet lofty style of declamation.

Under Thespis and his immediate successors, little or no relation appears to have existed between the subjects of the chorus and that of the accompanying monologues. The latter had merely been introduced as episodes or interludes between the pauses of the chorus. The case was now exactly reversed ; the dialogue formed the main body of the piece, and the chorus became no more than an interlude. The choral songs formed, in their subject, an impressive comment on the incidents of the drama ; giving utterance, in sage and solemn strains, to the moral or religious sentiments, or to the patriotic emotions which it was supposed the passing scene ought to excite in the spectators.

It has been said, in allusion to the lofty style and the lyrical inspiration of these compositions, that if, in ancient tragedy, the performers spoke the language of heroes and kings, they spoke in the choruses the language of the gods.

The place occupied by the chorus, and the num-

ber to which it was restricted, have already been adverted to. The individuals composing it represented any character that best suited the purpose of the drama; whether it required that they should personate a band of aged men, or of sage matrons or of priests, or virgins, or of attendants on festivity or funeral solemnity. While singing or reciting the part assigned them, they danced in time to the measure and cadence of music, in bands of equal number; moving from right to left as they repeated the choral strophe; then back from left to right during the antistrophe, and facing the spectators as they recited the epode.

The style of the dances was grave or lively, according to the nature of the poetry which they accompanied. Indelicate movements or gestures were expressly reprobated by Aristotle, as totally at variance with the moral character of tragedy. Some idea may be formed of the skill with which the dancing was accommodated to the subject, from the testimony of the same author, as quoted by Athenæus, who states that Telestes, a performer in the "Seven Chiefs of Thebes," was so accomplished in this particular, that the course of the action was perfectly expressed by his movements.

The musical instruments, which served as an accompaniment to the voices of the chorus, were few and simple. As the poetry directly related to the incidents of the piece, to which it served as an explanation or comment, it required distinct articulation; consequently, the music was not to overwhelm

the voices of the singers. The flute, the pipe, and the lyre, the instruments almost exclusively used, were precisely of this character. Yet in martial choruses, such as those of the Seven Chiefs, the occasional introduction of the trumpet was probably permitted.

Of the wonderful effects produced by modern orchestras, in giving to the compositions of the poet the united aid of exquisite singing and music, in the most complex, yet most harmonious combination, and with a power that electrifies and astonishes even unscientific ears, the Greeks appear to have known nothing. Yet, after all, what combinations of this description can touch the feelings like the tones of the human voice with a simple accompaniment, provided those tones be of a very fine quality? Here lay the true source, it is probable, of that wonderful power ascribed to Grecian music in melting or exciting the passions. In this way Demodocus, in Homer, draws tears from the eyes of Ulysses. The early attention which the Greeks paid to vocal, no less than to musical science, their high degree of natural taste, and the favourable influence of their exquisite climate, conspired to give to the human voice among them a compass, a sweetness, and a flexibility, unknown in countries less polished, or more distant from the sun.

The culture of musical science, the study of dialectics, and the exercises of the palæstra, formed the prominent features of education at Athens in her best days. Anaxagoras introduced there a

taste for philosophical speculation ; and, under his instructions, Pericles, it is said, acquired that dignified and polished style of rhetoric of which he was the first who set his countrymen the example. In what way music was rendered by the Greek subservient to moral discipline is not very intelligibly explained, though it is strongly asserted by their greatest philosophers. Pythagoras delighted in its study, and inculcated it on his disciples. Plato ascribes much of the growing degeneracy of his countrymen to their abandonment of the simple severe, and grave character of the ancient music for a style effeminate and sensual. Similar complaints are made by Aristotle. In all the principal schools of philosophy music was cultivated, and innumerable treatises on it emanated from them.

Go, view  
The schools of ancient sages : his who bred  
Great Alexander to subdue the world.  
Lyceum there, and painted Stoa next :  
There thou shalt hear and learn the secret power  
Of harmony in tones and numbers hit,  
By voice or hand, and various-measured verse,  
Æolian charms and Dorian lyric odes.

PAR. REG. book iv.

There is a curious passage in Thucydides, in which he states that the Spartan troops were carefully taught to march on their enemies to the measured sound of flutes or pipes, which not only animated their courage, but was specially designed to regulate the movement of their limbs, and to restrain within due bounds their natural impetuosity. Polybius has recorded some very curious details of

the musical education of the Arcadians; and particular instances are related of Solon, of Terpander, and of Timotheus; in which, by accompanying impassioned strains of poetry with the lyre, or the flute, they produced an overpowering influence on illustrious individuals or on large auditories. The expense of getting up the chorus was considerable. It was defrayed by the government, for every poet whose piece, after undergoing the scrutiny of appointed judges, was deemed worthy of being admitted to the tragic contest. Great pains were taken, by diligent rehearsals, to prepare the performers for an able discharge of their allotted functions. Athenæus records an instance in which Sophocles sung to the music of his lyre in the chorus of one of his own tragedies. However deep was the interest which the Greeks took in the dialogue of tragedy, the chorus appears to have been their peculiar delight. Its lyrical inspiration, the rhythm of the verse, its thrilling appeals to their patriotic or religious feelings, the mystic solemnity of its dances, and its musical attractions, styled by Aristotle the principal embellishment of tragedy, sufficiently account for this preference. To native Greeks, enthusiastically alive to these various attractions, and intimately acquainted with the traditions or customs, whence originated numberless allusions unintelligible to the acutest modern scholars, the time occupied by the chorus was a sort of continued enchantment. To the modern student, indeed, who is embarrassed by its difficulties of construction, and the obscurity of its allusions, who



surveys it stripped of its appropriate embellishments, and who can at best but imperfectly appreciate the grace and harmony, the swell and pomp, of its high-sounding lays, it is apt to appear a tedious suspension in the development of the plot,—an unnatural separation between kindred portions of the dialogue. Nor can it be denied, that in the case of *Æschylus* it often swelled into prolixity, since its restriction within narrower bounds is one of the improvements ascribed by the ancient critics themselves to his successors. But to do real justice to the chorus, the critic must forget himself and the modern world, and realize as nearly as possible the feelings, the prejudices, and the tastes of an ancient Greek; he must reflect on the variety and the perfection of its various embellishments: what he has felt or thought in his closet, with his lexicon on one side and *Hermannus de Metris* on the other, after some severe hours spent in combating the knotty difficulties of a chorus, ought, if possible, to be altogether discarded from his memory. What poetry, to English ears, can sound more musically harmonious, for instance, than the choral parts of *Milton's Comus*? Were the English to become a dead language, and a foreign student to occupy himself with those compositions after a lapse of many centuries of ignorance and barbarism had clouded over the meaning of their local or learned allusions, and, by introducing a false pronunciation, had broken the spell of their harmony, or dissolved the charm of their “linked sweetness long drawn out,” what a different judg-

ment would he probably pass on them from that which a correct knowledge of all these particulars now produces!

It will be obvious, from the preceding statement, that the chorus, with its various accompaniments, formed the striking peculiarity of the ancient as opposed to modern tragedy. The subjects, moreover, round which the former revolved, being principally derived from poetic history and marvellous tradition, imparted to it a mien and port peculiarly stately, corresponding to the expressive touches of Milton's portraiture:—

Sometimes let gorgeous tragedy  
In sceptred pall come sweeping by,  
Presenting Thebes or Pelops' line,  
Or the tale of Troy divine.

This restriction of subjects was a necessary consequence of the circumstances in which Greece was at this time placed—isolated by superior refinement from the rest of the world, confined therefore to her own resources, and only just beginning to be enriched with the expanding treasures of authentic history. Considering how similar, nay, often, how identical, are the subjects of the three great tragedians, we cannot but admire the richness of invention, and the ingenuity displayed in the variety of their treatment.

Occasionally the persons composing the choral band descended from the heights of empyrean poetry, and took part in the dialogue itself, by means of their *κορυφαῖος* (coryphæus) or leader. He spoke,

according to circumstances, either as a single person or for the whole band, or aided the progress of the action by brief explanations, or uttered expressions of pity for suffering virtue, or in condemnation of crime or impiety. At such times the choral band advanced to the front of the orchestra, so as to be brought within the sphere of the action.

The style of speaking and sentiment, to which the chorus is confined when thus passing the limits of its more official functions, proves that the expedient of the coryphæus was resorted to only when circumstances called for remarks or explanations which could not properly proceed from the persons of the drama. Nothing in fact can be more tame or puerile than the style of speaking to which he is restricted. Father Brumoy, in allusion to it, calls him, with laughable quaintness, *l'honnête homme de la pièce*.

When the incidents that elicited these commonplace remarks were of a nature to excite the strongest emotions of terror or pity, of surprise or admiration, there must have been something extremely ludicrous in the contrast between the feelings of the spectators and the cold truisms quaintly uttered by the chorus. These and similar absurdities were a necessary consequence of that law of Grecian tragedy, which permitted not the chorus to quit the theatre throughout the progress of the drama, and yet never allowed of their active intervention. They were consequently auditors of all supposed soliloquies, privy to all plots, spectators of all im-

pending dangers, and at the same time condemned to massive quiescence.

Sir Walter Scott, in his *Essay on the Drama*, has placed this portion of our subject in so humorous a light, that we must indulge in a quotation.

“When a deed of violence was to be acted, the helpless chorus, instead of interfering to prevent the atrocity to which the perpetrator had made them privy, could only, by the rules of the theatre, exhaust their sorrow and surprise in dithyrambics. This was well ridiculed by Bentley in his farce called the ‘Wishes,’ in one part of which strange performance he introduced a chorus after the manner of the ancient Greeks, who are informed, by one of the dramatis personæ, that a madman with a firebrand has just entered the vaults beneath the place which they occupy, and which contains a magazine of gunpowder. The chorus, instead of stirring from the dangerous vicinity, immediately commence a long complaint of the hardship of their fate, exclaiming pathetically, ‘Oh! unhappy madman—or, rather, unhappy we the victims of this madman’s fury—or thrice, thrice unhappy the friends of the madman, who did not secure him and restrain him from the perpetration of such deeds of phrensy—or three and four times hapless the keeper of the magazine, who forgot the keys in the door!’”

The above is of course a humorous caricature of the extra-official functions of the chorus, yet many instances might be pointed out of the complete apathy with which they are made to survey scenes

of crime, or danger, or terror, which would almost justify a literal application of the satire.

Before the subject of the chorus is dismissed, the light which it reflects on the religious and moral opinions of the Greeks deserves to be adverted to.

The mystic lore of Pythagoras, the lofty speculations of Plato, the logical subtleties of the schools, were for the philosophical few. The tragic poet was to arouse or touch the feelings of the multitude of Athens: he therefore selected those topics to which the understandings and the hearts of his auditors would most surely and sympathetically respond. A tone of ideal grandeur, it is true, was diffused over his characters, and pervaded his sentiments; yet not in such a degree as wholly to lift them out of the sphere of ordinary humanity. Making, therefore, due allowance for the exaggeration of poetry, we may derive from these dramatic writers a tolerably correct idea of the moral resources of their countrymen, under the pressure of the sorrows and trials inevitable to humanity.

It is impossible to peruse the choruses of Æschylus without acknowledging that his moral aim was lofty, and that, according to his imperfect light, his piety was sincere. Reverence for the gods—respect for the sanctity of an oath, and of the conjugal tie—inflexible justice—moderation in prosperity—patience under sufferings—devoted love to our country—generous hospitality;—these are the moral principles which he inculcates, and to which his countrymen, however defective their practice, listened with applause. Nothing that is licentious or impure

stains his pages, or leaves it doubtful, as in the case of Euripides, whether the parade of morality, rather than a real moral feeling, inspired the apparent indignation with which he lashes vice or impiety, or loes homage to suffering virtue. It is interesting to trace in these particulars a verification of the Scriptural assertion, that, even among the heathen, "God left not himself without witness;" for we clearly recognise, in these choral strains, no less than in the principal schools of Grecian philosophy, the power of conscience, the restless stirrings of the immortal mind, and a clear perception of the essential difference between vice and virtue.

Where, then, does the poet fail? He fails by that meager, imperfect knowledge of the depth and extent of moral obligation, which is obvious in every system of pagan ethics; but he particularly fails, where heathens or deists ever must, in the attempt to fortify even the moral principles for which they do contend, by sanctions practically efficacious. How could it be otherwise? In the absence of the light of Revelation there can be no certain knowledge of the nature of the true God, and therefore no unhesitating appeal to the authority of a Supreme Ruler, infinite in wisdom and power, in justice and mercy, whose will, emanating from these perfections, forms the necessary and eternal rule of right and wrong. Neither can there be any but glimmering notions of a future life and a future judgment, the certainty of which invests the precepts of Christianity with such awful force and such controlling influence.

A settled darkness rested on the religious horizon of the great mass of the heathen world, from the confounding influence of the follies and crimes which their mythology ascribed to the gods whom they adored;\* and even their philosophers, many of whom soared above these vulgar superstitions, were staggered on the very threshold of inquiry by their inability to reconcile the origin and prevalence of moral evil with any satisfactory notions of the divine justice and benevolence.

Why sin and evil were permitted to enter into the world, and mar the works of a Being to whose perfections they are infinitely opposed, is a question which, though partially cleared up by the light of Revelation, is in many of its relations beyond the grasp of human intelligence. Even the most obvious phenomena of nature are a mystery to man the moment that he attempts to penetrate their final causes. To a capacity so limited, the secret counsels of the Great Eternal, and the stupendous scheme of his moral government of the universe,

\* How the vices ascribed to the gods operated on morals is keenly illustrated in numberless passages of the dialogues of Lucian; a writer who, though belonging to the later periods of Grecian literature, thought and composed, as it has been justly observed, in the spirit of the age of Pericles. Aristophanes often touches with caustic force on the same subject: thus, in the *Clouds*, as translated by Cumberland.

ADIC.

What is justice?

There's no such thing—I traverse your appeal.

DIC. How, no such thing as justice?

ADIC.

No: where is it?

DIC. With the immortal gods.

ADIC.

If it be there,

How chanced it Jupiter himself escaped

For his unnatural deeds to his own father?

embracing, as it probably may, the relations of past, present, and to come, must consequently, in a transcendently higher degree, prove an unfathomable depth. It is enough for man to know that the nature of that Almighty Being is essential truth and goodness; that evil originated in rebellious opposition to his holy will, and shall finally exist only in its penal consequences. Revelation, though it repels the searchings of vain curiosity, illustrates these particulars, so essential to human happiness and to moral ends, with a plenitude of light. In the great scheme of redemption, in particular, it opens to the eye of faith such refulgent manifestations of the love of God to a lapsed world, and such bright prospects of the immortal felicity which awaits his faithful servants, as ought to dispel every shade of doubt, and all anxiety but that of pleasing Him "in whose favour is life," "and at whose right hand are pleasures for evermore." In the absence of this celestial light, the most fanciful expedients were resorted to for cutting the knot, which it was found impossible to unloose. Hence, throughout the East, the Magian hypothesis of two eternal, supreme, and conflicting principles—the one evil, the other good—each of whom was to be worshipped and propitiated. Hence, among the Grecian poets, especially the tragedians, the ascription of supreme power to a blind destiny, of which gods and men were more or less the victims. Nothing in their Olympus like stability, nothing like eternity is to be found. The throne of Jupiter himself was founded on the ruins of the dynasties of a race of elder gods,



and he is represented as harassed by fears lest destiny had decreed the subversion of his own. *Æschylus* propounds this doctrine in the *Prometheus*; it occurs in *Homer*; and *Lucian*, in later times, made it in his dialogues the subject of his caustic irony and wit. How merry in his pages is *Momus*, at the expense of the father of the gods, whom he represents as a limited being, subject in all respects to the blind and inscrutable decrees of fate! On this same principle, persons eminent for the very virtues which these writers most enforced, are represented as liable to become, by the decrees of destiny, miserable victims of uncontrollable misfortunes, unwilling perpetrators of dreadful crimes.

X It was destiny, or necessity (another word for it), which stifled in the bosom of *Agamemnon* the feelings of a father when he sacrificed *Iphigenia* at the bloody shrine of *Diana*. It was destiny that guided the steel of *Orestes* to the breast of his guilty mother, and yet left him, in punishment of the parricidal act, to be haunted and maddened by the *Furies*. Even *Clytemnestra* palliates her guilt by the plea, that a relentless demon, the instigator of the crimes of the house of *Atreus*, had irresistibly acted on her will. The sacrifice of black cattle to infernal *Jupiter*, to *Night*, and to the *Furies*, originated in these bewildering views which supposed the existence of an undefinable but supreme power, inimical to human happiness. Under the withering influence of such a system, what moral virtues could fairly expand, what hope could cheer or animate afflicted humanity or suffering virtue? Yet there are not

wanting modern writers of eminent popularity, who, in contrasting the features of Grecian paganism with Christianity, have painted the former as joyous, festive, and attractive, the latter as gloomy, melancholy, and repulsive. What is called the gloom and severity of Christianity, is but the discipline necessary to restore a fallen creature to his original dignity and happiness. What is called the joyousness of heathenism is but a set of expedients to drown present reflection, and to strew with flowers the path of moral corruption and ultimate misery. From these remarks, produced by the theological and moral strains of the chorus, we return to the more immediate tenor of our subject.

The tragic contests principally took place at the great festival of Bacchus, in part of March and April. Athens was then crowded with strangers, anxious to view these "dramatic Olympia," and with deputies from her dependencies, who came to pay into her treasury their annual tribute. When trilogies were acted, the contest must often have extended through successive days. A trilogy consisted of three tragedies, the subjects of which were not necessarily allied and continuous, though they often were. Occasionally a tetralogy was produced, by adding to the three tragedies a fourth piece, which was usually a satiric drama. The prize was not awarded to the victor by the suffrages of the assembled multitude, though their impressions naturally influenced the decision. It was committed by the presiding archon to the award of a select number of

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judges, who were bound by a solemn oath to observe the most rigid impartiality, though their virtue, it appears, was not so stern as to be always inaccessible to a bribe. The victor was crowned in the presence of the assembled multitude, and hailed by their enthusiastic plaudits. Glory was the real prize, for a wreath of ivy was the only visible fruit of the triumph. Horace probably had a special eye to this fact in designating the Greeks

*præter laudem nullius avaris.*  
only covetous of praise.

The name not only of the victor was proclaimed, but those also of the one or two who approached the nearest to him in merit. It appears from the Symposium of Plato, in which Agatho, a tragic poet who had gained the prize, is introduced, that it was usual for the victor to offer sacrifice for his success in the presence of his friends and his choral performers, at the earliest opportunity after the contest.

The prize of the victorious chorus was a tripod; and it was usually dedicated by the choregus, or chorus-master, in a particular street or quarter adjoining the theatre, and thence denominated "tripodes." To these tripods were attached the names of the presiding archon, of the poet who composed the piece, and of the choregus. Most of the choragic inscriptions at Athens are of the latter part of the fourth century. Many of the tripods were placed on temples dedicated to Bacchus; others on columns and rocks near the theatre, as their remains still tes-

tify.\* These monuments are not only in themselves interesting, but fix beyond doubt the site of the Dionysian theatre. "Among them is the beautiful little temple of Lysicrates, in honour of the victory of his chorus, with a roof rising to a triangular apex, for the support of the prize tripod. It answers exactly to one of those temples mentioned by Pausanias as standing in the quarter of the tripods, between the prytaneum and the sacred enclosure of Bacchus."†

The number of festivals and processions at Athens requiring the services of a chorus, was such, that each tribe was obliged to provide a choregus, who was maintained, if the tribe was poor, at the expense of the state. The first duty of the choregus, after providing a set of singers and musicians, selected in general from his own tribe, was to appoint a teacher (*χοροδιδάσκαλος*) to instruct them in their parts. Their diet was regulated with a view to strengthen the voice. He had also to furnish the sacred clothes adorned with gold, and all the other ornamental appendages of the performers. At festivals and pompous processions he appeared at their head, wearing a gilt crown and a splendid robe.

From this account it will be evident that the office of choregus involved a considerable expense, and, although the standard was limited by law, it was often exceeded through vanity and the desire of distinction. In subsequent times, when tragedy was propagated from Athens into the courts of

\* Leake's Athens, p. 153.

† Id.

princes, the splendour of the tragic chorus was exceedingly magnificent, as at Alexandria and Rome, which led Horace to complain that the beauties of the poetry attracted far less attention than the gaudiness of the accompaniments. The choregi appointed by the tribes were allotted by the archon to the rival poets, which was called "giving a chorus."

Contests between rival choruses were not confined to tragic representation, but occurred at various public festivals. A tripod appears to have been the customary prize; but in earlier times, when a goat was the prize of tragedy, the Cyclian choruses, according to Bentley, contended for a bull, and the harpers for a calf. The famous Simonides won fifty-six of these victories, as appears from an epitaph on his tomb, recorded by Tzetzes.

*\*Εξ ἐπὶ πεντήκοντα, Σιμωνίδῃ, ἦραο νίκας,  
καὶ τρίποδας.\**

His great contemporaries, Themistocles and Aristides, disdained not to undertake in their turn

\* "Fifty-six victories and as many tripods, O Simonides, thou didst obtain." The above facts are collected from Boeckh's *Economy of Athens*, vol. ii. 207; Bentley's *Phalaris*, 254, 289; *Theatre of the Greeks*, p. 202; *Voyage d'Anacharsis*, vol. ii. c. 12. The oration of Demosthenes against Meidias also throws much light on the subject. Besides confirming the general statements on this subject in the preceding pages, it contains a passage, by which it appears that, in addition to the reward of a tripod conferred on the victorious chorus, its choregus was crowned and offered sacrifice. The orator also refers to the possibility of bribing the judges, and to the ruinous prodigality of expense with which some of the choregi discharged their functions.

the office of choregi. "Aristides," says Plutarch, "dedicated in the temple of Bacchus choraic tripods on account of his victory, which still exist with this inscription: 'The tribe of Antiochus gained the victory; Aristides was choregus; Archestratus composed the piece.'" The same author states that Themistocles, when choregus at a tragic representation, won the prize, and put up a tablet in memory of his triumph, with this inscription: "Themistocles was choregus; Phrynichus wrote the piece; Adimanthus was archon." Plutarch enumerates, among various other choregi, the illustrious name of Plato.

The commonalty of Athens were admitted to the theatre, by a decree passed through the influence of Pericles, at the rate of two oboli per head, which sum the magistrates were directed to pay for every applicant unable to pay for himself. The public treasury of Athens, supplied in a great measure by the contributions levied on her allies, was prodigally drawn on for this purpose. Severe censures were occasionally flung out against the dishonesty of the practice by public orators, but the people were so tenacious of their privilege, that even the eloquence of Demosthenes, when directed against it, proved unavailing.

A remarkable instance is recorded of the degree in which their imaginations were absorbed by the fictitious events of the drama. The dreadful intelligence of the complete destruction of the Athenian fleet and army under Nicias in Sicily, towards the close of the Peloponnesian war, reached the city

when its numerous population was assembled in the theatre, entirely absorbed by the representation of a drama, half-tragic, half-comic, by Hegemon. The messenger announced the fatal news. Scarcely a person there but had lost a son or husband, a brother or a friend. A moment's pause gave expression to a thrilling sensation of general grief. The next moment a signal was given to go on with the piece ; and, wrapping their heads in their mantles, in order to conceal their sensations of grief from the foreigners who were present, they continued to survey, or listen to it, to the end.

The latter days of Æschylus corresponded not in prosperity to those of his youth and manhood. It is certain that he incurred voluntary exile from Athens, though the exact cause is involved in obscurity. Probably a concurrence of disappointments had soured his lofty and ambitious spirit, and he had to encounter in the Athenian mob a people whose caprice was proverbial. On one occasion popular indignation was excited against him on a charge of his having been guilty of violating in a tragedy the sanctity of the Eleusinian mysteries. Clemens Alexandrinus, who notices the charge, says that he escaped by proving to his judges that he was not initiated, and that his fault was therefore unintentional ; but Ælian, who touches on the same topic in the fifth book of his history, asserts that he would have been capitally condemned, had not his brother Ameinias averted the fury of the judges and of the people, by stepping forwards, and appealing to their feelings in favour of

Æschylus by displaying the stump of the arm which he had himself lost in the action of Salamis. This story is probably founded in fact; for the Greeks became furious when any indignity, either real or supposed, was offered to the objects of their superstitious worship. Thus Aristophanes introduces in his Frogs an imprecation of vengeance on one Cynesias, who had offered insult to the bust of Hecate. X Thus also Thucydides paints in vivid colours the popular fury excited against Alcibiades, when suspected of mutilating, or causing to be mutilated, the Hermæ, fixed on the side of the public ways in and about Athens; and similar instances of popular superstition might be multiplied from Grecian history.

The retirement of Æschylus from Athens has also been ascribed to resentment at the preference bestowed on a tragedy of his rival Sophocles, in the case of a contest, instituted on a memorable occasion. According to Plutarch, Cimon, in obedience to an oracle, commanding the Athenians to bring back the bones of their ancient hero Theseus to Attica, had diligently sought, and successfully discovered these remains in the isle of Sciros, whence he transferred them with great pomp to their native seat. In celebration of this popular act, public games were instituted, and the tragic poets were invited to a contest. When it took place, the prize was awarded in a more solemn manner than usual; for, at the request of the presiding archon, the judges were named by Cimon and his officers, who graced the occasion with their



presence. The prize, after much deliberation, was assigned to Sophocles; which Æschylus was so little able to brook, that he quitted his country for Sicily, where he was hospitably received by Hiero of Syracuse, a prince of literary tastes and great munificence, and whose name has been immortalized by the muse of Pindar.

The fame of Æschylus had already been established on so firm a basis, and the generosity of his disposition is so imprinted on his poetry, that it would scarcely be just to credit on evidence no better than that of a writer so late as Plutarch, a story thus derogatory to the moral qualities of his mind. Whatever concurrence of circumstances made him leave Athens, it is certain that he never returned thither, and that he settled in Sicily. Literature and the arts were cultivated at this period with distinguished success in that island. The court of Hiero was the resort of men of genius from various parts of Greece, among whom the names of Xenocles in philosophy, and of Simonides and Bacchilides in poetry, are particularly recorded. Pindar, also, was a cherished visitant at the court of Hiero; and the expatriated poet, in case they met there, must have found in him not only a kindred genius, but one who, from his intimate acquaintance with Athens, was peculiarly qualified to enter into his feelings.

How long he survived his self-banishment is not certain. Sicily, notwithstanding its local and literary attractions, must have appeared insipid, compared with Athens, to so ambitious and ardent a

spirit ; and a constant, though involuntary, recurrence to the scenes and circumstances of his early friendships and triumphs, and to the rupture of the ties which linked him with them, diffused probably a pensive, if not a sombre tinge, over his latter days. But if, as Plutarch asserts, his feelings were wounded, his language and reasoning were philosophical. Athenæus quotes with great encomium his having said, in allusion to the preference shown to his rival, "that he dedicated his own tragedies to Time." He also ascribes to him the following saying, very modest as to his own productions, and full of reverence for the Mæonian bard : "that his pieces were but scraps from the magnificent banquets of Homer." This acknowledgment, though couched in terms which none but himself would have applied to his own splendid poetry, was fundamentally just ; for there is no doubt that he had studied Homer deeply ; that he had regarded him as his model, and that the orientalisms which, as Fabricius has remarked, more frequently occur in him than in any other Attic writer, were a result of this preference. That he composed tragedies in his retirement is certain ; for Athenæus accuses him of having fallen into Sicilianisms in some of them ; and one is particularly recorded as having been composed out of compliment to Hiero, shortly after he arrived at his court.

The cause to which his death is ascribed, though mentioned by various authors, and made the subject of ancient gems, wears a fabulous aspect. An eagle, it is pretended, as it hovered over a rocky

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spot where he was seated, wrapped in meditation, let fall from its talons a tortoise, which, lighting directly on his bald head, fractured the skull. It is added, with ludicrous gravity, that the eagle mistook the crown of his head for a piece of rock, and intended to break on it the shell of the tortoise. His death is assigned to the eighty-first Olympiad, when he was in his sixty-ninth year. His remains were honoured by Hiero with a distinguished funeral, which was signalized by tragic contests. Resplendent as was the poetic fame of Æschylus, he valued himself still more on the glory he had acquired at Marathon, and therefore ordered the following epitaph to be inscribed on his tomb :\*

Ἀισχύρου Εὐφορίωνος Ἀθηναίου τῶδε κεῖθαι  
 Μῆμα καταφθίμενου πυροφόροιο Γέλας·  
 Ἄλκην δ' εὐδόκιμον Μαραθῶνιον ἄλσος ἄν εἴποι,  
 Καὶ βαθυχαιτῆις Μῆδος ἐπιστάμενος.

This tomb covers the remains of Æschylus the Athenian, the son of Euphorion, who died at Gelas, fertile in corn. The glades of Marathon would attest his distinguished valour, and the long-haired Mede who proved it.

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\* There is scarcely an Athenian oration in Thucydides but refers to Marathon, either directly or by implication; and, in much later times, the well-known apostrophe of Demosthenes to the heroes who had perished there, proves that the orator well knew he was touching a chord in the bosoms of his countrymen, the sympathetic vibration of which was certain. Even modern patriotism thrills at the mention of Marathon. Johnson's fine passage need not be quoted, because it is stored in the memory of every cultivated Englishman. In this point of view, Pericles spoke with the force of prediction, when he said, in the course of his noble funeral oration, "the whole earth is the sepulchre of illustrious men; nor is the epitaph, engraven on tombstones, in their native land, the sole guardian of their fame; but the memory of their actions in other countries forms a more faithful record in the heart than any that human hands can fabricate."—Vide Thucyd. lib. ii. 43.

The distinction acquired by Æschylus in the sphere of the drama, naturally fired the ambition of men of genius to enter on the same career. Allusion has already been made to Sophocles as a successful rival of Æschylus. He was just rising into notice when the fame of the former approached its maturity. The first mention of him is coupled with the fact, that he was selected, from his personal accomplishments, to form one of a chorus of distinguished youths, who sung a pæan round the public trophy which was erected in Athens in honour of the battle of Marathon. Æschylus was one of the most distinguished of the heroes who were then hailed by the grateful plaudits of their countrymen. If his eye lighted on the graceful youth, how little did he think that he beheld in him the most formidable rival of his fame.

Inferior to Æschylus in those qualities of genius which tend to the sublime and the terrible, and seldom rivalling his coruscations of lyrical splendour, Sophocles excelled him in the judicious selection of his incidents, in a more correct delineation of the workings of the passions, in the skilful development of his plots, and in producing, by a train of circumstances apparently natural in their connexion, the most startling coincidences. He also restricted within more judicious limits the choral interludes, which in the dramas of Æschylus often ran into prolixity. Aristotle refers to great improvements introduced by him in scenical decoration and invention. His style was dignified, and, at the same

time, so mellifluous, that it procured for him the appellation of the Attic Bee. He was extremely popular with his contemporaries, to whom he was endeared by the fine qualities of his heart, as well as by his distinguished acquirements. His life was prolonged to the great age of ninety-one ; and when, after attaining eighty years, he had to defend himself against a charge of mental imbecility, he put his accusers to the blush by publicly reading his *Œdipus Coloneus*, one of the most perfect of his tragedies, and then recently composed. His judges, at the close of this remarkable defence, dissolved the assembly, and conducted him home in triumph.

About the time that *Æschylus* quitted Athens, appeared *Euripides*, the last in order of time of the illustrious trio of the Greek tragedians. He enjoyed every advantage of education afforded by that accomplished age. In philosophy *Anaxagoras* was his instructor ; and in eloquence *Prodicus*, the most celebrated sophist of the day. According to *Aulus Gellius* he entered on the tragic contest at the early age of eighteen, but the higher authority of the *Arundel Marble* fixes it at the eighty-first Olympiad, when he was in his twenty-fifth year. During a period of forty-six years he proved a powerful rival to *Sophocles*, and soared far above the competition of other contemporary poets ; though the unjust caprice or venality of the judges occasionally bestowed the prize on rivals far his inferiors. To the improvements already engrafted by *Sophocles* on the tragic art, it was his ambition to add by higher de-

degrees of dramatic effect, or scenical illusion, by all the artifices of polished diction, and by a greater variety in the music, and the lyrical measures of his choruses. In the loftier qualities of the tragic muse he was unequal to either of his predecessors—to Æschylus, in the strong delineation of individual character, in masculine vigour of style, in fervour and sublimity of imagination—to Sophocles, in the texture of his plots, in majesty of sentiment, and of language : and to both in the able adaptation of his choral odes to the peculiarities of his subjects ; but he was eminently successful in depicting scenes or emotions of tenderness and feeling, in the easy and natural conduct of his dialogue, in an oratorical flow of style, and in a felicitous admixture of moral reflections with the course of his subjects. These he brought into his tragedies from the school of Socrates ; and the philosopher, it is said, took pleasure in witnessing their representation. His dramas frequently exhibit strange contrasts of exquisite beauties and revolting absurdities. After deeply touching the heart by the devotion, the delicacy, and the tenderness of conjugal affection in his *Alceste*, for instance, he disgusts the taste of his readers towards the conclusion of the piece, by the low buffoonery with which he has invested the character of *Hercules*. Often he is betrayed by his oratorical powers into a redundancy unsuited to the language of passion, which is broken, short, and exclamatory. On some occasions he approaches the elevation of *Æschylus*. The scene which paints the feelings of *Orestes* (in the tragedy bearing his name), when

haunted and pursued by the Furies, is one of the finest pieces of sublime poetic painting in any language. He has been severely censured for violating the original dignity of tragedy, by seductive effeminacy of language and sentiment, by the occasional introduction of amatory descriptions deficient in delicacy, by painting in some of his dramas the progress of incestuous attachments, and by the unrestrained use both of musical and metrical arts, excitive of sensual passions. After a long career of active, and often successful competition, he incurred, like Æschylus, voluntary exile; and ended his days at the court of Archelaus, king of Macedon, from whom he experienced the kindest and most distinguished reception. Domestic infelicity, and disappointed ambition, are conjectured to have concurred in leading him to renounce Athens. His death is ascribed to a cruel cause,—laceration by ferocious hounds; which are said to have seized on the unfortunate poet as he rambled through the recesses of a solitary wood. The renown of this poet pervaded Greece in an extraordinary degree; and a remarkable instance of it is mentioned by Plutarch as having occurred after the total defeat and capture of the Athenian army in Sicily, under Nicias, when every soldier who could repeat a line of Euripides was excepted from the cruel fate which befell his comrades in arms.

The respective merits of these three great tragedians was a favourite subject of discussion at Athens. With the lower classes Euripides seems to have been the favourite. The simplicity of his dialogue,

and the triteness of his moral aphorisms, brought him within the level of their capacity. But with men of cultivated taste, the lofty inspiration of Æschylus, and the chastened grandeur of Sophocles, secured them the preference. Peculiar reverence was also felt towards the former as the acknowledged father of tragedy; and a signal instance of it was given after his death by a law forbidding the repetition of any pieces in the theatre, excepting those of Æschylus. In process of time the same honour was paid to his two rivals.

A very witty and animated debate on the respective merits of Æschylus and Euripides is preserved in the latter part of the *Frogs* of Aristophanes. The scene is laid in the pagan world of spirits, by one of the customs of which, it is feigned, that men, illustrious in any art or profession, occupy there a rank and station conformable to their genius and acquirements in the world above. The question in debate is, which of the two above named bards has the best claim to the seat of honour, or president's chair, in the prytaneum\* of the shades. Till the arrival of Euripides, Æschylus had held it in undisputed supremacy, but it is now confidently claimed by the former: the discussion becomes warm; and, in order to put a stop to the growing confusion, Pluto orders that the question shall be gravely debated in his presence. Sophocles, on this,

\* The prytaneum was a large public hall at Athens, in which (among other uses to which it was applied) it was customary to honour any citizen who had rendered signal services to the state with a public entertainment.



gives notice, that should the prescriptive claims of Æschylus be no longer allowed, he himself will contend for the post of honour; for though he reverently yields it to the father of tragedy, he entirely disallows the pretensions of Euripides. Much of humorous and mock preparation for the encounter takes place, after which the chorus breaks forth thus :—

How will the bard of furious soul,  
 Swell with indignant rage;  
 His glaring eyes in phrensy roll  
 To see his wily foe preparing to engage!  
 Grand shall now the contest be  
 Of glittering phraseology:  
 While one shall every strained conceit refine,  
 Paring each thought, and polishing each line,  
 The other, scorning art's dull track to try,  
 Shall pour his genuine thoughts in loftiest poesy.  
 His bristly neck aloft he'll rear,  
 And shake his shaggy mane;  
 A low'ring frown his brow shall wear,  
 Fierce emblem of disdain.  
 While he in furious mood along,  
 Shall roll his complicated song, &c. &c.  
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With powers of pliability,  
 And tuneful tongue the other fraught,  
 Studious of smoothest harmony,  
 Shall twist and torture ev'ry thought,  
 While with superior subtilty,  
 In many a nicely labour'd phrase,  
 Champing the bit of envy, he  
 Retorts upon his rival's sounding lays.\*

Then follows a scene in which Euripides taunts his rival with his lofty and turgid phraseology, his swelling conceptions, and his imaginary monsters.

\* Dunster's Translation of the Frogs.

Æschylus retorts on him as dealing in notorious plagiarisms, artificial conceits, and demoralizing subjects. Several successive scenes occur, in which each criticises, with much wit and irony, the subjects, characters, and diction of the other; and parodies, with great felicity, some of the prologues and choruses in the most celebrated tragedies of his rival. The comedian is evidently, throughout, the partisan of Æschylus, and therefore gives him the advantage in this war of words. As Euripides was a friend of Socrates, to whose party Aristophanes was most inimical, he never appears disposed to do him common justice, but frequently introduces his name in his dramas in a tone of ridicule or sarcasm. No translation can do justice to the lucid beauty of style, and the pointed wit of the original in the scenes alluded to; but the scholar, who studies them with a competent knowledge of the tragedies of the contending poets, will be greatly amused and interested. One of the accusations urged by Æschylus deserves to be adverted to, on account of its moral force and dignity. He charges Euripides with having degraded tragedy from the elevated sphere in which he had fixed it,

High actions and high passions best describing;

and of rendering it the vehicle of exciting amatory and licentious feelings. Euripides defends himself by the trite remark, that he had only painted such stories as he found them; on which Æschylus asserts, in lofty strains, that instruction is the proper end and aim of poetry; and that it behooves a poet

rather to hide tales of infamy, than to corrupt the public ear with their pernicious details. The moment of decision at length arrives. Bacchus, who is present, and who, as the god of tragedy, is appealed to as judge between the poets, passes sentence in favour of Æschylus, and commissions him to repair again to the upper world, to vindicate the original dignity of the tragic muse. The poet prepares to obey, and desires that in his absence the seat of honour may be occupied by Sophocles.

Out of more than seventy tragedies composed by Æschylus, only seven are extant; but among these are three of the most celebrated—the Prometheus, the Seven Chiefs before Thebes, and the Agamemnon. Of the remaining four, the Chœphoræ and the Eumenides formed parts of a trilogy, of which the Agamemnon was the first member. The Persæ was also one member of a trilogy, and the same may probably be true of the Suppliants.

The plot of the Prometheus is extremely simple, but it is throughout a splendid poem. The interest entirely depends on its original and expressive delineation of the individual character of Prometheus, a giant of the Titanic race, who forms a prominent figure in the earlier traditions of Grecian mythology; and in whose history some obscure references may be traced to the scriptural account of the fall of man, or of the dispersion at Babel. The scene is laid on the borders of the ocean, among the crags of Caucasus; to one of which Prometheus is chained, by order of Jupiter, in punishment of

rebellious opposition to his will. Strength and Force, whom the poet has boldly personified, are the instruments of his sufferings, which he endures in a spirit of stern independence, and of lofty defiance of the powers of the Thunderer,

( With courage never to submit or yield. )

The sombre character of this picture is relieved by the entry of a chorus of sea-nymphs, and of old Oceanus, who condole with the sufferer, and recommend submission. His anguish on the one hand, and unbending fortitude on the other, are placed in powerful contrast; and his colloquy with the chorus is fraught with passages equally sublime and poetical. The character of Prometheus is sustained to the last with undiminished force of colouring. Even when the thunders and lightnings of vengeance roar and flare around him, and the earth gapes at his feet, his voice is still heard, as he descends into the abyss, uttering, amid the convulsions of nature, defiance to his tormentor. The episode of Io ought not to pass unnoticed, as an indefensible violation of the unity of action in this tragedy.

The Seven Chiefs before Thebes, founded on the story of Eteocles and Polynices, was a very favourite piece both with the Grecian public and its author. It is rather a melo-drama than a regular tragedy. In glowing lyrical inspiration, in energy of sentiment and expression, in picturesque imagery and description, it is not surpassed by any drama, ancient or modern. Perhaps the spirit and energy

of Dryden's *Alexander's Feast* may best convey to English readers an idea of the fire, and life, and varying style of its choruses, which, with the aid of appropriate voices and music, must have produced on the auditors no ordinary impression and excitement. Plutarch quotes a saying of Gorgias the sophist, that Mars, not Bacchus, inspired this splendid drama.

The subject of the *Suppliants* is the landing of Danaus and his daughters in Argos; and the incident principally turns on the question, whether or not Pelagus and his subjects will receive them hospitably. The descriptive passages are picturesque, and the dialogue is animated. The daughters of Danaus compose the chorus, and their supplicating strains are fraught with fine poetry and pious sentiment; but, on the whole, it is a drama devoid of nice art in its construction, and a tragedy without a tragical conclusion. Schlegel conjectures, and with much plausibility, that it is a disconnected member of a trilogy, the other parts of which were the *Danaiidæ* and the *Egyptians*; two dramas, the names alone of which are preserved. If so, it might probably be intended by the poet as introductory to the tragical action of the piece which succeeded it, in which case we are devoid of the just materials of candid criticism.

There is more of nice art in the development of the plot of the *Choëphoræ* than in most of the dramas of *Æschylus*. But a close comparison between it and the *Electra* of *Sophocles*, of which the subject is the same, will forcibly illustrate the im-

provements introduced by the latter into the structure of tragedy. In that of *Æschylus*, *Orestes* and *Electra* recognise each other almost immediately; and this discovery made, the catastrophe ensues with obvious facility: but in that of *Sophocles*, the interest of the reader is deeply excited by the suspension of this recognition, which leads on to that well-known scene over the supposed ashes of *Orestes*, the pathos and tenderness of which are truly exquisite, and defy translation. The concluding scene, in which *Ægysthus*, on lifting the veil from the supposed corpse of *Orestes*, is petrified at beholding the features of *Clytemnestra*, is one of the most tragic incidents that can well be imagined.

The introductory description in the *Eumenides*, of *Orestes* seated as a suppliant at the altar of *Apollo*, at whose instigation he had slain his adulterous mother, yet haunted by the *Furies* in vengeance of the matricidal act, forms a most terrific picture, and illustrates the strange theology of the Greeks, who represented hapless mortals as the puppets of destiny, and yet punished them as though they were free agents. The aspect and demeanour of these terrible daughters of night are sketched with a spirit and a mystery that recall *Shakspeare's* weird sisters. Popular superstition in classical, as in Gothic ages, conjured up the ghosts of the murdered to haunt the steps of the murderer; so that the apparition of the stern shade of *Clytemnestra*, invoking vengeance, is by no means out of keeping in this appalling picture. The

Eumenides, like the Suppliants, is without a tragic close. It greatly flags towards the conclusion. The presence of so many mysterious beings prepares the imagination for a corresponding catastrophe ; so that the good humour into which the Furies are finally soothed by Minerva, and the polished style of panegyric in which they hail the land of Attica, and celebrate its fame, however gratifying to Athenian vanity, appear to all impartial criticism misplaced and incongruous.

The subject of the *Persæ* is the triumph of confederated Greece over the vast force collected by Xerxes for its subjugation. The scene is laid in Persia. It commences by a fine description of the magnitude of the invading host, and the splendour of the armies and chiefs composing it, mingled with expressions of the deepest anxiety as to their fate. This strain is interrupted by the appearance of a Persian messenger, who announces the dreadful catastrophe of its complete rout. Atossa, the mother of Xerxes and widow of Darius, and the chorus, break forth on this intelligence into expressions of grief and lamentation. In the depth of their despair, they invoke the shade of Darius to appear, and to give them counsel. Magical rites are employed to raise the spirit of the departed monarch, who obeys the summons ; and, after uniting in their sorrows, advises that no further attempt be made to subjugate Greece. But his entry and departure, though not wholly devoid of mystery and thrilling accompaniments, are too much in the style of an ordinary mortal ; and nothing results from

the incident sufficiently important to account for resorting to such supernatural agency. The arrival of Xerxes, who gives vent to furious grief, concludes the piece. There is no great art in the construction of this drama, nor any particular merit in the dialogue. But it has one passage fraught with the highest interest, from its giving a more spirited and lively description than is elsewhere to be found of the great naval victory of Salamis. The main facts closely accord with the narrative of Herodotus; but they are here invested with the bright hues of poetry, which has seldom kindled into enthusiasm in memory of a martial exploit more glorious or more momentous in its consequences. The war song of the Greeks, supposed to burst forth simultaneously from the commingling voices of the heroes who crowded their ships as they approached the Persian line, so much resembles in spirit and sentiment those heart-stirring appeals to national patriotism and valour, of which there are such striking examples in their historians and orators, that we can hardly doubt that it was the very song of that memorable day.

The only tragedy which it remains for us to notice is the *Agamemnon*, which not only manifests the powerful sway of its author over the sources of pity and terror, but the superior skill which he occasionally displayed in the construction of his dramas; for it exemplifies, by strict unity of action, the grand law of Aristotelian criticism—in other words, it exhibits a marked beginning, middle, and end. The opening speech of the watchman, invoking the



fiery signal, so long expected, of the fall of Troy and its sudden appearance, form a highly picturesque introduction to the subsequent scenes. The arrival of the herald, which dissipates all doubt as to the import of the signal, and his feelings of pious delight at finding himself again on Grecian soil, which deny utterance for some moments to the glorious intelligence, give continuity to the preceding action, and are in themselves touching incidents. The return of Agamemnon, the illustrious head of the Grecian confederacy, covered with glory, to the city and throne of his ancestors, forms an imposing central point in the drama, and renders the speedy occurrence of his ignominious death doubly tragic, by the striking contrast of a rapid transition from the pinnacle of fortune to its lowest degradation. He is painted as the dignified monarch, and the wise man, no less than the heroic chieftain. His experience of the fickleness of fortune, and of the trials of life, has chastened every proud or haughty feeling in the retrospect of his triumphs, communicating to his sentiments a wise moderation, which blends affection with the awe inspired by his loftier qualities. Clytemnestra's character wants a little softening to bring it within the verge of human sympathies. She is too implacably hypocritical and perfidious. Even the Lady Macbeth of our great dramatist appears human when she shrinks for a moment from her stern purpose at the sight of features which remind her of her father; and after the bloody deed has been perpetrated at her instigation, she pines beneath the stings of a guilty conscience;

but in Clytemnestra there are no such relentings,—even her allusions to Iphigenia have nothing in them of real tenderness, and to the last she glories in her crimes with a savage ferocity. But the part of Cassandra forms the surpassing beauty of this drama. It is as original in conception as it is perfect in execution. Plato has said of Homer that he was the first of tragedians ; by which he meant that many of the characters and incidents of his poems furnish fruitful subjects for the finest tragedies. But neither the Iliad nor the Odyssey could have suggested to Æschylus the materials of his Cassandra. They emanated from the glowing conceptions of his own brilliant and excited fancy. As a beautiful and captive princess, the daughter of Priam and the sister of Hector, we are prepared to take a deep interest in her fate ; but that interest becomes blended with awe, admiration, and terror, when she is viewed in her loftier character,—that of the ~~phrensiéd and inspired~~ prophetess,—whose eye glances on the dark page of destiny, and who sketches what she reads there by appalling figures and by expressive imagery. When attention is first excited towards her, she appears dejected, statue-like, and overwhelmed by sorrow. Clytemnestra, after vain endeavours to extract answers from her to various questions harshly put, irritated by her inflexible silence, disdainfully retires, when, after a few moments, the tongue of the prophetic princess becomes unloosed, and she petrifies or thrills the chorus by her wild and boding exclamations. The past crimes of the house of Atreus,

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depicted in terrific visions, throng her excited imagination; and she points, by enigmatical allusions, or expressive imagery, to its future fortunes. The bloody banquet given by Atreus to his brother Thyestes, at which the flesh of his own children, murdered by Atreus in a spirit of implacable revenge, was served up among the festive meats, draws down on Agamemnon, according to the retributive ideas of the Greeks, that vengeance which his father had escaped. The spectral forms of those children, exhibiting to view their entrails and their hearts, flit before the eye of her fancy, and hover over the parapets of the palace. Cassandra addresses their hapless forms in a strain of wild invocation; and, at the same moment, the mournful dirge of the Furies sounds like the knell of death in her ears, and forbodes the approach of new woes. A change comes over the spirit of her dream. Fresh images, shifting in their form, and portending the approaching assassination of Agamemnon, by turns excite and terrify, animate and subdue her. Mingled with these dreadful allusions are various touches of tenderness and feeling,

softening the rugged brow  
Of darkness till it smiles.

The cadence of the verse, in these plaintive passages, assumes the flow of elegy; while the workings of the prophetic rage are depicted by impetuous language, by sudden transitions, and by daring images. At length, exhausted by the violence of her own feelings, Cassandra quits the scene, when

the cries of the dying Agamemnon from within alarm and agitate the chorus. After a short pause they approach, and discover Clytemnestra standing over the corpse of her husband, still holding in her hand the bloody instrument of his death. Her haughty implacable spirit is finely painted ; so also are the indignant feelings, and resolute loyalty of the freeborn Greeks. But from this point the tragedy degenerates into a prolixity of dialogue unexpected and tiresome. On the whole, it may justly be asserted of the Agamemnon, that had it been the sole production of its author, it would justly entitle him to a place in the foremost ranks of genius.

Perhaps the Bard of Gray has more of the rapt and inspired character of the Cassandra of Æschylus than any similar creation of poetic fancy in ancient or modern times. Johnson and Algarotti have supposed the Bard to be an imitation of the Nereus of Horace, and there is an obvious ground of comparison as respects the form in which the several prophecies are delivered, for in the one case the fleet of Paris is arrested in its course by the prophetic warnings of the sea-god, in the other the triumphant march of Edward the First, by that of the Bard ; but the prophecy of Nereus, though delivered in a dignified style, is a tame performance, compared with the Bard of Gray ; the affinity between which and the Cassandra, though not formal, is, in more essential points, sufficiently striking, consisting in a strong resemblance between their daring transitions, their figurative allusions, their

dark, but expressive hints, and their picturesque visions of past or future events. The familiarity of our English Pindar with the Greek poets is well known, and the train of thought in one of the finest of his odes, that on Adversity, may be resolved into a chorus of Æschylus, as he has himself indicated by the prefixed motto. A striking affinity might also be traced in various particulars between the exquisite portraiture of the phrensy of Dido, in Virgil, and that of Cassandra, though the obvious diversity of the class of feelings under which each labours, allows not of a close or detailed comparison.

The French critics, appealing to Aristotle, have laid down such rigid rules for the strict observation of the unities of action, time, and place, and have been so severe on those who have neglected them, on Shakspeare especially, that it might naturally be supposed the Grecian philosopher had clearly and pointedly defined these to be essential canons of the drama. But nothing is less true. His mind was too liberal and sagacious thus severely to cramp the march of genius. He does contend for unity of action as indispensable—by which he means the selection of one leading incident or subject, to the able development and impressive conclusion of which all the events introduced shall be subordinate. But on the unity of place he says nothing, and, as respects the unity of time, he recommends, not insists, that the action of a drama should appear to be comprehended within one revolution of the sun. Æschylus, though not an undeviating observer of

the unity of action, in proof of which the episode of Io in the Prometheus has already been cited, appears by his existing dramas to have in general conformed to it: he seldom transgresses the unity of place, but he disregards the unity of time, when it can only be maintained by an undue sacrifice of the needful and impressive coincidences of his subject. Thus, in the Agamemnon, a series of picturesque circumstances usher in the august return of that monarch to the palace of his ancestors; their succession does not strike the imagination as extravagant, though on reflection it is obvious they could not have been crowded within the circle of Aristotle's allotted hours. It is the prerogative of such a genius as Æschylus or Shakspeare, to exhibit the standard of allowable deviation from the arbitrary enactments of frigid criticism.

Having now detailed the principal facts which illustrate the rise and progress of Grecian Tragedy, the author will take leave of his subject, by expressing an earnest hope that an accurate acquaintance with the Greek and Roman classics may never cease to be regarded by his countrymen as one of the most essential branches of a liberal education. They are the purest standards of taste and judgment in literary composition. No productions of mind, however ingenious, can command permanent admiration, or exercise a really useful influence, which conform not in their leading features to universal reason, truth, and nature. This conformity forms the talisman, by means of which those illustrious writers have satisfied the judgment, and delighted

the imagination of the greatest men, in distant and in recent times, in the most civilized countries, and under every form of government and manners. Nature, it is true, may be represented under various, or even contrary aspects, and yet be nature still. There is a low and disgusting nature, which is the object of reprehension and abhorrence,—there is an ordinary degree of polish and cultivation, to which she may be raised by education and good society ; but the idea is also present to every cultivated imagination, of a nature purified from vulgarity and grossness, and elevated by all that is dignified, graceful, and attractive, which is the just object of admiration and esteem. This is equally the case with respect to character, to art, to language, and to sentiment, and every approach to it is an approach to true taste, the first principles of which resolve themselves into refined nature and moral fitness. Now making all due allowance for the errors of heathenism, it was with this elevation of purpose and of aim that the most illustrious of the writers and artists of Greece thought and composed. It glows in their finest poetry, it animates their noblest oratory, it is imprinted on their most admired statues, it is the union of taste and learning with genius and invention, it is the *τὸ καλόν* of the ancient philosophy, the *beau idéal* of the finest writers on modern poetry and art. Experience has fully proved the necessity of deferring to some such standards of authority as the classical writers, in order to oppose an effectual check to that tendency towards literary barbarism, into which the public taste will be occa-

sionally betrayed by the fatal splendour of brilliant but perverted genius.

It forms not the least of the many advantages of true taste, that when its principles are once acquired, they communicate a corresponding charm to the exertions of the mind, wheresoever directed, and, like those tests in chymistry which discover the hidden qualities of bodies, detect, as it were instinctively, the true and the false in the various compositions of genius.

Finally, it is not to be forgotten that our religion, and much of its history and its evidences, are enshrined in the learned languages, and that when the fundamental truths of Christianity were to be asserted and illustrated, the strenuous efforts of the great reformers were instantly directed to the cultivation of Grecian literature.

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[The editor has been reluctantly compelled to omit the usual embellishments to the present number, as no authentic likeness of *Æschylus* has yet been discovered.]





**PROMETHEUS CHAINED.**

### **DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.**

**STRENGTH,**

**FORCE,**

**VULCAN,**

**PROMETHEUS,**

**OCEANUS,**

**Io,**

**MERCURY,**

**CHORUS, Nymphs of the Ocean**

# PROMETHEUS CHAINED.

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## ARGUMENT.

The imprudence of Prometheus in imparting to mortals the sacred gift of fire, of which Jupiter had in his wrath deprived them, exposes him to the indignation of the god, who commissions Vulcan, with the assistance of Strength and Force, to chain him to Mount Caucasus, where a vulture is sent to prey on his liver—In this disconsolate situation, unmoved by the solicitations of his friends, and defying the utmost cruelty of his powerful oppressor, he is visited by Io, in the course of her wanderings, who learns from him the future sufferings which she is destined to undergo—Prometheus then proceeds to enumerate her numerous descendants and their various exploits, one of whom, Hercules, should release him from his bondage by the command of Jove, when he learns that an ill-starred marriage is impending over him unless he be forewarned by Prometheus how to avert the calamity—Mercury is despatched by Jupiter to inquire of the sufferer the nature of the woes thus denounced against him; and in case of refusal to threaten the infliction of still heavier punishments, which the intrepid Prometheus prepares to encounter.

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## STRENGTH, FORCE, VULCAN, PROMETHEUS.

**STRENGTH.** At length, then to the wide earth's  
extreme bounds,

To Scythia are we come, those pathless wilds  
Where human footstep never marked the ground.  
Now, Vulcan, to thy task; at Jove's command  
Fix to these high-projecting rocks this vain      5  
Artificer of man; each massy link  
Draw close, and bind his adamantine chains.  
The radiant pride, the fiery flame, that lends  
Its aid to ev'ry art, he stole and bore  
The gift to mortals; for which bold offence      10

The gods assign him this just punishment ;  
That he may learn to reverence the power  
Of Jove, and moderate his love to man.

VUL. Stern powers, your harsh commands have  
here an end,

Nor find resistance. My less hardy mind, 15  
Averse to violence, shrinks back, and dreads  
To bind a kindred god to this wild cliff,  
Exposed to every storm : but strong constraint  
Compels me ; I must steel my soul, and dare :  
Jove's high commands require a prompt observance  
High-thoughted son of truth-directing Themis, 21  
Thee with indissoluble chains, perforce,  
Must I now rivet to this savage rock,  
Where neither human voice, nor human form,  
Shall meet thine eye, but parching in the beams, 25  
Unsheltered, of yon fervid sun, thy bloom  
Shall lose its grace, and make thee wish the approach  
Of grateful evening mild, whose dusky stole  
Spangled with gems shall veil his fiery heat ;  
And night upon the whitening ground breathe frore,  
But soon to melt, touched by his orient ray. 31  
So shall some present ill with varied pain  
Afflict thee ; nor is he yet born, whose hand  
Shall set thee free : thus thy humanity  
Receives its meed, that thou, a god, regardless 35  
Of the gods' anger, honouredst mortal man  
With courtesies, which justice not approves.  
Therefore the joyless station of this rock  
Unsleeping, unreclining, shalt thou keep,  
And many a groan, many a loud lament 40  
Throw out in vain, nor move the rigorous breast  
Of Jove, relentless in his youthful power.

STR. No more : why these delays, this foolish  
pity ?

Dost thou not hate a god by gods abhorr'd,  
That prostitutes thy radiant boast to man ? 45

21 Themis was the daughter of Heaven and Earth, and was  
honoured as the goddess of truth and justice.

VUL. Strong are the ties of kindred and long converse.

STR. Well ; but to disobey thy sire's commands, Darest thou do that ? Is not that fear more strong ?

VUL. Soft pity never touched thy ruthless mind.

STR. Will thy vain pity bring relief ? Forbear, 50 Nor waste thyself in what avails not him.

VUL. Abhorred be all the fine skill of my hands.

STR. And why abhorr'd ? For of these present toils Thy art, in very truth, is not the cause.

VUL. Yet wish I it had been some other's lot. 55

STR. All have their lot appointed, save to reign In heaven, for liberty is Jove's alone.

VUL. Truth guides thy words, nor have I to gain-say.

STR. Why thus reluctant then to bind his chains ? Let not thy sire observe these slow delays. 60

VUL. The manacles are ready, thou mayst see them.

STR. Bind them around his hands ; with all thy force 65 Strike, nail them fast, drive them into the rock.

VUL. Thus far the work is finished, and not slightly.

STR. Strike harder, strain them, let them not relax :

His craft will work unthought-of ways to escape.

VUL. This arm is too inextricably fix'd.

STR. And now clasp this secure, that he may learn How impotent his craft, opposed to Jove.

VUL. This work he only can with justice blame. 70

STR. Across his breast draw now this stubborn bar Of adamant, fix firm its sharpened point.

VUL. Thy miseries, Prometheus, I bewail.

STR. Still dost thou linger ? Still bewail the foes Of Jove ? Take heed lest thou bewail thyself. 75

VUL. Thou seest an object horrible to sight.

STR. I see him honoured as his deeds deserve. But haste thee, fix this strong habergeon on him.

VUL. Constraint lies on me; urge not thou its rigour.

STR. Urge thee? I will, and in a higher tone. 80  
Downwards; with all thy force enring his legs.

VUL. This too is finish'd, with no ling'ring speed.

STR. Strike hard, drive deep their penetrating points.

Severe his eye, who nicely scans these works. 84

VUL. Thy voice is harsh and rugged as thy form.

STR. Now fair befall thy softness; yet upbraid not My ruder and un pitying ruthlessness.

VUL. Let us begone; the rigorous task is done.

STR. Now triumph in thy insolence; now steal  
The glory of the gods, and bear the gift 90  
To mortal man: will they relieve thee now?  
False is the boasted prudence of thy name,  
Or wanted now to free thee from thy fate.

PROMETHEUS.

Ethereal air, and ye swift-winged winds,  
Ye rivers springing from fresh founts, ye waves, 95  
That o'er the interminable ocean wreath  
Your crisped smiles, thou all-producing earth,  
And thee, bright sun, I call, whose flaming orb  
Views the wide world beneath, see what, a god,  
I suffer from the gods; with what fierce pains, 100  
Behold, what tortures for revolving ages  
I here must struggle; such unseemly chains  
This new-raised ruler of the gods devised.  
Ah me! That groan bursts from my anguish'd  
heart,

My present woes and future to bemoan. 105

When shall these suff'rings find their destined end?

But why that vain inquiry? my clear sight  
Looks through the future; unforeseen no ill  
Shall come on me; behooves me then to bear

Patient my destined fate, knowing how vain 110

To struggle with necessity's strong power.

But to complain, or not complain, alike

Is unavailable. For favours shown

To mortal man I bear this weight of wo ;  
 Hid in a hollow cane the fount of fire 115  
 I privately convey'd, of ev'ry art  
 Productive, and the noblest gift to men.  
 And for this slight offence, wo, wo is me !  
 I bear these chains, fix'd to this savage rock,  
 Unshelter'd from the inclemencies of the air. 120  
 Ah me ! what sound, what softly-breathing odour  
 Steals on my sense ? Be you immortal gods,  
 Or mortal men, or of the heroic race,  
 Whoe'er have reached this wild rock's extreme cliff,  
 Spectators of my woes, or what your purpose, 125  
 Ye see me bound, a wretched god, abhorr'd  
 By Jove, and ev'ry god that treads his courts,  
 For my fond love to man. Ah me ! again  
 I hear the sound of flutt'ring nigh ; the air  
 Pants to the soft beat of light moving wings ; 130  
 All that approaches now is dreadful to me.

PROMETHEUS, CHORUS.

CHORUS.

Forbear thy fears : a friendly train  
 On busy pennons flutt'ring light  
 We come, our sire not asked in vain,  
 And reach this promontory's height. 135  
 The clanging iron's horrid sound  
 Re-echo'd through our caves profound ;  
 And though my cheek glows with shame's crimson  
 die,  
 Thus with unsandal'd foot with winged speed I fly.

PROMETHEUS.

Ah me ! ah me ! 150  
 Ye virgin sisters who derive your race  
 From fruitful Thetis, and the embrace  
 Of old Oceanus, your sire, that rolls  
 Around the wide world his unquiet waves,  
 This way turn your eyes, behold 145  
 With what a chain fix'd to this rugged steep  
 The unenvied station of the rock I keep.



## CHORUS.

I see, I see, and o'er my eyes,  
 Surcharged with sorrow's tearful rain,  
 Dark'ning the misty clouds arise : 150  
 I see thy adamant chain ;  
 In its strong grasp thy limbs confined,  
 And withering in the parching wind :  
 Such the stern power of heaven's new-sceptred lord,  
 And law-controlling Jove's irrevocable word. 155

## PROMETHEUS.

Beneath the earth,  
 Beneath the gulfs of Tartarus, that spread  
 Interminable o'er the dead,  
 Had his stern fury fixed this rigid chain,  
 Nor gods nor men had triumph'd in my pain.  
 But pendent in the ethereal air, 161  
 The pageant gratifies my ruthless foes,  
 That gaze, insult, and glory in my woes.

## CHORUS.

Is there a god, whose sullen soul  
 Feels a stern joy in thy despair ? 165  
 Owns he not pity's soft control,  
 And drops in sympathy the tear ?  
 All, all, save Jove ; with fury driven  
 Severe he tames the sons of heaven ;  
 And he will tame them, till some power arise 170  
 To wrest from his strong hand the sceptre of the  
 skies.

## PROMETHEUS.

Yet he, ev'n he,  
 That o'er the gods holds his despotic reign,  
 And fixes this disgraceful chain,  
 Shall need my aid, the counsels to disclose 175  
 Destructive to his honour and his throne.  
 But not the honeyed blandishment, that flows  
 From his alluring lips, shall aught avail ;  
 His rigid menaces shall fail ;  
 Nor will I make the fatal secret known, 180  
 Till his proud hands this galling chain unbind,  
 And his remorse soothes my indignant mind.

CHORUS.

Bold and intrepid is thy soul,  
 Fired with resentment's warmest glow ;  
 And thy free voice disdains control, 185  
 Disdains the tort'ring curb of wo.  
 My softer bosom, thrill'd with fear  
 Lest heavier ills await thee here,  
 By milder counsels wishes thee repose :  
 For Jove's relentless rage no tender pity knows. 190

PROMETHEUS.

Stern though he be,  
 And, in the pride of power terrific dress'd,  
 Rears o'er insulted right his crest,  
 Yet gentler thoughts shall mitigate his soul,  
 When o'er his head this storm shall roll ; 195  
 Then shall his stubborn indignation bend,  
 Submit to sue, and court me for a friend.

CHO. But say, relate at large for what offence  
 Committed doth the wrath of Jove inflict  
 This punishment so shameful, so severe : 200  
 Instruct us, if the tale shocks not thy soul.

PRO. 'Tis painful to relate it, to be silent  
 Is pain : each circumstance is full of wo.  
 When stern debate among the gods appear'd,  
 And discord in the courts of heaven was roused ; 205  
 While against Saturn some conspiring will'd  
 To pluck him from the throne that Jove might reign ;  
 And some, averse, with ardent zeal opposed  
 Jove's rising power and empire o'er the gods ;  
 My counsels, though discreetest, wisest, best, 210  
 Moved not the Titans, those impetuous sons  
 Of Ouranus and Terra, whose high spirits,  
 Disdaining milder measures, proudly ween'd  
 To seize by force the sceptre of the sky.  
 Oft did my goddess mother, Themis now, 215  
 Now Gaia, under various names design'd,  
 Herself the same, foretell me the event,  
 That not by violence, that not by power,  
 But gentler arts, the royalty of heaven

G

Must be obtain'd. While thus my voice advised, 220  
 Their headlong rage deign'd me not ev'n a look.  
 What then could wisdom dictate, but to take  
 My mother, and with voluntary aid  
 Abet the cause of Jove? Thus by my counsels  
 In the dark deep Tartarean gulf inclosed 225  
 Old Saturn lies, and his confederate powers.  
 For these good deeds the tyrant of the skies  
 Repays me with these dreadful punishments.  
 For foul mistrust of those that serve them best  
 Breathes its black poison in each tyrant's heart. 230  
 Ask you the cause for which he tortures me?  
 I will declare it. On his father's throne  
 Scarce was he seated, on the chiefs of heaven  
 He shower'd his various honours; thus confirming  
 His royalty; but for unhappy mortals 235  
 Had no regard, and all the present race  
 Will'd to extirpate, and to form a new.  
 None, save myself, opposed his will; I dared;  
 And boldly pleading saved them from destruction,  
 Saved them from sinking to the realms of night. 240  
 For this offence I bend beneath these pains,  
 Dreadful to suffer, piteous to behold:  
 For mercy to mankind I am not deem'd  
 Worthy of mercy; but with ruthless hate  
 In this uncouth appointment am fix'd here 245  
 A spectacle dishonourable to Jove.

CHO. Of iron is he form'd and adamant,  
 Whose breast with social sorrow does not melt  
 At thy afflictions: I nor wish'd to see them,  
 Nor see them but with anguish at my heart. 250

PRO. It is a sight that strikes my friends with pity.

CHO. But had the offence no further aggravation?

PRO. I hid from men the foresight of their fate.

CHO. What couldst thou find to remedy that ill?

PRO. I sent blind Hope to inhabit in their hearts.

CHO. A blessing hast thou given to mortal man.

PRO. Nay, more, with generous zeal I gave them  
 Fire. 257

**CHO** Do mortals now enjoy the blazing gift ?

**PRO.** And by it shall give birth to various arts.

**CHO.** For such offences doth the wrath of Jove  
Thus punish thee, relaxing naught of pain ? 261  
And is no bound prescribed to thy affliction ?

**PRO.** None else, but when his own will shall  
incline him.

**CHO.** Who shall incline his will ? Hast thou no  
hope ?

Dost thou not see that thou hast much offended ? 265  
But to point out the offence to me were painful,  
And might sound harsh to thee : forbear we then ;  
Bethink thee how thy ills may find an end.

**PRO.** How easy, when the foot is not entangled  
In misery's thorny maze, to give monitions 270  
And precepts to the afflicted ! Of these things

I was not unadvised ; and my offence  
Was voluntary ; in man's cause I drew  
These evils on my head : but ills like these,  
On this aerial rock to waste away, 275  
This desert and unsocial precipice,  
My mind presaged it not. But cease your grief,  
Wail not my present woes ; on the rough point  
Of this firm cliff descend, and there observe  
What further may betide me, ev'n the whole 280  
Of my hard fate ; indulge me, O indulge  
This my request, and sympathize with me  
Thus wretched ; for affliction knows no rest,  
But rolls from breast to breast its vagrant tide.

**CHO.** Not to the unwilling are thy words directed.  
With light foot now this nimble-moving seat, 286  
This pure air, through whose liquid fields the birds  
Winnow their wanton way, I leave ; and now  
Alight I on this rude and craggy rock,  
Anxious to hear all the unhappy tale. 290

OCEANUS, PROMETHEUS, CHORUS.

**OCE.** Far, distant, through the vast expanse of air,  
To thee, Prometheus, on this swift-wing'd steed,  
Whose neck unrein'd obeys my will, I come

In social sorrow sympathizing with thee.  
 To this the near affinity of blood 295  
 Moves me ; and be assured, that tie apart,  
 There is not who can tax my dear regard  
 Deeper than thou : believe me, this is truth,  
 Not the false glozings of a flatt'ring tongue. ✓  
 Instruct me then in what my power may serve thee,  
 For never shalt thou say thou hast a friend 301  
 More firm, more constant than Oceanus.

PRO. Ah me ! What draws thee hither ? Art  
 thou come

Spectator of my toils ? How hast thou ventured  
 To leave the ocean waves, from thee so call'd, 305  
 Thy rock-roof'd grottoes arch'd by Nature's hand,  
 And land upon this iron-teeming earth ?  
 Comest thou to visit and bewail my ills ?  
 Behold this sight, behold this friend of Jove,  
 The assertor of his empire, bending here 310  
 Beneath a weight of woes by him inflicted.

OCE. I see it all, and wish to counsel thee,  
 Wise as thou art, to milder measures : learn  
 To know thyself ; new model thy behaviour,  
 As the new monarch of the gods requires. 315  
 What if thy harsh and pointed speech should reach  
 The ear of Jove, though on his distant throne  
 High-seated, might they not inflame his rage  
 To inflict such tortures, that thy present pains  
 Might seem a recreation and a sport ? 320  
 Cease then, unhappy sufferer, cease thy braves,  
 And meditate the means of thy deliverance.  
 To thee perchance this seems the cold advice  
 Of doting age ; yet, trust me, woes like these  
 Are earnings of the lofty-sounding tongue. 325  
 But thy unbending spirit disdains to yield  
 Ev'n to afflictions, to the present rather  
 Ambitious to add more. Yet shalt thou not,  
 If my voice may be heard, lift up thy heel  
 To kick against the pricks ; so rough, thou seest, 330  
 So uncontroll'd the monarch of the skies.

But now I go, and will exert my power,  
 If happily I may free thee from thy pains.  
 Meanwhile be calm ; forbear this haughty tone :  
 Hast not thy copious wisdom taught thee this, 335  
 That mischief still attends the petulant tongue ?

PRO. I gratulate thy fortune, that on thee  
 No blame hath lighted, though associate with me  
 In all, and daring equally. But now  
 Forbear, of my condition take no care ; 340  
 Thou wilt not move him ; nothing moves his rigour ;  
 Take heed then, lest to go brings harm on thee.

OCE. Wiser for others than thyself I find  
 Thy thoughts : yet shalt thou not withhold my  
 speed.

And I have hopes, with pride I speak it, hopes 345  
 To obtain this grace, and free thee from thy sufferings.

PRO. For this thou hast my thanks ; thy courtesy  
 With grateful memory ever shall be honour'd.  
 But think not of it, the attempt were vain,  
 Nor would thy labour profit me ; cease then, 350  
 And leave me to my fate : however wretched,  
 I wish not to impart my woes to others.

OCE. No ; for thy brother's fate, the unhappy  
 Atlas,

Afflicts me : on the western shore he stands,  
 Supporting on his shoulders the vast pillar 355  
 Of Heaven and Earth, a weight of cumbrous grasp.  
 Him too, the dweller of Cilicia's caves,  
 I saw, with pity saw, Earth's monstrous son,  
 With all his hundred heads subdued by Force,  
 The furious Typhon, who 'gainst all the gods 360  
 Made war ; his horrid jaws with serpent hiss  
 Breathed slaughter, from his eyes the gorgon glare  
 Of baleful lightnings flash'd as his proud force  
 Would rend from Jove his empire of the sky.  
 But him the vengeful bolt, instinct with fire, 365  
 Smote sore, and dash'd him from his haughty vaunts,  
 Pierced through his soul, and wither'd all his  
 strength.

Thus stretch'd out huge in length beneath the roots  
 Of Ætna, near Trinacria's narrow sea,  
 Astonied, blasted, spiritless he lies ; 370  
 On whose high summit Vulcan holds his seat,  
 And forms the glowing mass. In times to come  
 Hence streams of torrent fire with hideous roar  
 Shall burst, and with its wasteful mouths devour  
 All the fair fields of fruitful Sicily. 375  
 Such rage shall Typhon, blasted as he is  
 With Jove's fierce lightning, pour incessant forth  
 In smoking whirlwinds and tempestuous flame.

PRO. Thou art not unexperienced, nor hast need  
 Of my instruction ; save thyself, how best 380  
 Thy wisdom shall direct thee. I will bear  
 My present fate, till Jove's harsh wrath relents.

OCE. Know'st thou not this, Prometheus, that  
 soft speech  
 Is to distemper'd wrath medicinal ?

PRO. When seasonably the healing balm's ap-  
 plied ; 385  
 Else it exasperates the swelling heart.

OCE. But in the fair endeavour, in the attempt,  
 What disadvantage, tell me, dost thou see ?

PRO. Unfruitful labour, and light-thoughted folly.

OCE. Be that my weakness then. Oft when the  
 wise 390

Appears not wise, he works the greatest good.

PRO. This will be deem'd my simple policy.

OCE. These words indeed remand me to my grotto.

PRO. Cease to bewail me, lest thou wake his  
 wrath.

OCE. What, the new monarch's of heaven's potent  
 throne ? 395

PRO. Take care his indignation be not roused.

OCE. Thy misery shall be my monitor.

PRO. Go then, be cautious, hold thy present judg-  
 ment.

OCE. Thy words add speed to my despatch. Al-  
 ready

My plumed steed his levell'd wings displays 400  
To fan the liquid air, through fond desire  
In his own lodge his wearied speed to rest.

PROMETHEUS, CHORUS.

CHORUS.

For thee I heave the heart-felt sigh,  
My bosom melting at thy woes ;  
For thee my tear-distilling eye 405  
In streams of tender sorrow flows :  
For Jove's imperious ruthless soul,  
That scorns the power of mild control,  
Chastens with horrid tort'ring pain  
Not known to gods, before his iron reign. 410  
Ev'n yet this ample region o'er  
Hoarse strains of sullen wo resound,  
Thy state, thy brother's state deplore,  
Age-honour'd glories ruin'd round.  
Thy woes, beneath the sacred shade 415  
Of Asia's pastured forests laid,  
The chaste inhabitant bewails  
Thy groans re-echoing through his plaintive vales.  
The Colchian virgin, whose bold hand  
Undaunted grasps the warlike spear ; 420  
On earth's last verge the Scythian band,  
The torpid lake Mæotis near ;  
Arabia's martial race, that wield  
The sharp lance in the embattled field,  
Through all their rock-built cities moan, 425  
The crags of Caucasus return the groan.  
One other, ere thy galling chain,  
Of heaven's high sons with tortures quell'd,  
That rack each joint, each sinew strain,  
Titanian Atlas I beheld ; 430  
His giant strength condemn'd to bear  
The solid, vast, and pond'rous sphere.  
The springs whose fresh streams swell around,  
The hoarse waves from their depths profound,



And all the gloomy realms below, 435  
Sigh to his sighs, and murmur to his wo.

PRO. It is not pride : deem nobler of me, virgins :  
It is not pride that held me silent thus ;  
The thought of these harsh chains, that hang me  
here,

Cuts to my heart. Yet who, like me, advanced 440  
To their high dignity our new-raised gods ?

But let me spare the tale, to you well known.  
The ills of man you've heard : I form'd his mind,  
And through the cloud of barb'rous ignorance  
Diffused the beams of knowledge. I will speak, 445  
Not taxing them with blame, but my own gifts  
Displaying, and benevolence to them.

They saw indeed, they heard ; but what avail'd  
Or sight, or sense of hearing, all things rolling  
Like the unreal imagery of dreams, 450

In wild confusion mix'd ? The lightsome wall  
Of finer masonry, the rafter'd roof  
They knew not ; but, like ants, still buried, delved  
Deep in the earth, and scoop'd their sunless caves.

Unmark'd the seasons changed, the biting winter,  
The flower perfumed spring, the ripening summer  
Fertile of fruits. At random all their works, 457  
Till I instructed them to mark the stars,  
Their rising and a harder science yet,  
Their setting. The rich train of marshall'd num-  
bers

I taught them, and the meet array of letters. 461

To impress these precepts on their hearts I sent  
Memory, the active mother of all wisdom.

I taught the patient steer to bear the yoke,  
In all his toils joint-labourer with man. 465

By me the harness'd steed was train'd to whirl  
The rapid car, and grace the pride of wealth.  
The tall bark, lightly bounding o'er the waves,  
I taught its course, and wing'd its flying sail.

To man I gave these arts ; with all my wisdom 470  
 Yet want I now one art, that useful art  
 To free myself from these afflicting chains.

CHO. Unseemly are thy sufferings, sprung from  
 error

And impotence of mind. And now enclosed  
 With all these ills, as some unskilful leach 475  
 That sinks beneath his malady, thy soul  
 Desponds, nor seeks medicinal relief.

PRO. Hear my whole story, thou wilt wonder  
 more,

What useful arts, what science I invented.  
 This first and greatest · when the fell disease 480  
 Prey'd on the human frame, relief was none,  
 Nor healing drug, nor cool refreshing draught,  
 Nor pain assuaging unguent ; but they pined  
 Without redress, and wasted, till I taught them  
 To mix the balmy medicine, of power 485  
 To chase each pale disease, and soften pain.  
 I taught the various modes of prophecy,  
 What truth the dream portends, the omen what  
 Of nice distinction, what the casual sight  
 That meets us on the way ; the flight of birds, 490  
 When to the right, when to the left they take  
 Their airy course, their various ways of life,  
 Their feuds, their fondnesses, their social flocks.  
 I taught the aruspex to inspect the entrails,  
 Their smoothness, and their colour to the gods 495  
 Grateful, the gall, the liver streak'd with veins,  
 The limbs involved in fat, and the long chine  
 Placed on the blazing altar ; from the smoke  
 And mounting flame to mark the unerring omen.  
 These arts I taught. And all the secret treasures  
 Deep buried in the bowels of the earth, 501  
 Brass, iron, silver, gold, their use to man,  
 Let the vain tongue make what high vaunts it may,  
 Are my inventions all ; and, in a word,  
 Prometheus taught each useful art to man. 505

CHO. Let not thy love to man o'erleap the bounds

H

Of reason, nor neglect thy wretched state :  
 So my fond hope suggests thou shalt be free  
 From these base chains, nor less in power than  
 Jove.

PRO. Not thus—it is not in the Fates that thus  
 These things should end ; crush'd with a thousand  
 wrongs, 511

A thousand woes, I shall escape these chains.  
 Necessity is stronger far than art.

CHO. Who then is ruler of necessity ?

PRO. The triple Fates and unforgetting Furies. 515

CHO. Must Jove then yield to their superior  
 power ?

PRO. He no way shall escape his destined fate.

CHO. What, but eternal empire, is his fate ?

PRO. Thou mayst not know this now : forbear to  
 inquire.

CHO. Is it of moment what thou keep'st thus  
 close ? 520

PRO. No more of this discourse ; it is not time  
 Now to disclose that which requires the seal  
 Of strictest secrecy ; by guarding which  
 I shall escape the misery of these chains.

#### CHORUS.

#### STROPHE.

Never, never may my soul 525

Jove's all-ruling power defy ;

Never feel his harsh control,

Sov'reign ruler of the sky.

When the hallow'd steer has bled,

When the sacred feast is spread, 530

Midst the crystal waves below,

Whence father Ocean's boundless billows flow,

Let not my foot be slow :

529 The chorus here alludes to the solemn annual festival, which the gods held with their father Oceanus, and at which they showed their piety and reverence by their attendance and ministry.

There, the ethereal guests among,  
No rude speech disgrace my tongue, 535  
May my mind this rev'rence keep;  
Print it strong, and grave it deep.

ANTISTROPHE.

When through life's extended scene  
Hope her steadfast lustre throws,  
Swells the soul with joy serene, 540  
With sublimest triumph glows.  
Seest thou this pure lustre shine?  
Are these heart-felt raptures thine?  
My cold blood curdles in my veins,  
To see thy hideous woes, thy torturing pains, 545  
And adamantine chains.  
Thy free soul, untaught to fear,  
Scorn'd the danger threat'ning near;  
And for mortals dared defy  
The sovereign monarch of the sky. 550

EPODE.

Vain thy ardour, vain thy grace,  
They nor force nor aid repay;  
Like a dream man's feeble race,  
Short-lived reptiles of a day. 555  
Shall their weak devices move  
The order'd harmony of Jove?  
Touch'd with pity of thy pain,  
All sad and slow I pour the moral strain;  
Changed from that melting vein,  
When the light mellifluous measure 560  
Round thy bath and round thy bed  
For our sea-nymph sister spread,  
Awoke young love and bridal pleasure,  
And pour'd the soul of harmony,  
To greet the bright Hesione. 565

IO, PROMETHEUS, CHORUS.

Io. Whither, ah, whither am I borne?  
To what rude shore, what barb'rous race? O thou,  
Whoe'er thou art, that chain'd to that bleak rock,  
The seat of desolation, ruest thy crimes,

Say on what shore my wretched footsteps stray.—  
 Again that sting!—Ah me, that form again!— 571  
 With all his hundred eyes the earth-born Argus—  
 Cover it, Earth! See, how it glares upon me,  
 The horrid spectre!—Wilt thou not, O Earth,  
 Cover the dead, that from thy dark abyss  
 He comes to haunt me, to pursue my steps, 576  
 And drive me foodless o'er the barren strand?  
 Hoarse sounds the reed-compacted pipe, a note  
 Sullen and drowsy.—Miserable me!  
 Whither will these wide-wand'ring errors lead me?  
 How, son of Saturn, how have I offended, 581  
 That with these stings, these tortures thou pursuest  
 me,

And drivest to madness my affrighted soul!  
 Hear me, supreme of gods, O hear thy suppliant,  
 Blast me with lightnings, bury me in the earth, 585  
 Or cast me to the monsters of the sea;  
 But spare these toils, spare these wide-wandering  
 errors,

Which drive me round the world, and know no rest.

CHO. Hear'st thou the voice of this lamenting  
 virgin?

For such she is, though in that form disguised. 590

PRO. I hear her griefs, that whirl her soul to  
 madness,

Daughter of Inachus, whose love inflames  
 The heart of Jove; hence Juno's jealous rage  
 Drives the poor wanderer restless o'er the world.

IO. Whence is it that I hear my father's name?  
 Speak to my misery, tell me who thou art; 596  
 What wretch art thou, that to a wretch like me  
 Utterest these truths, naming the malady,  
 Which, heaven-inflicted, stings my tortured soul  
 To phrensy? Hence with hurrying steps I rove 600

578 Io, in her distraction, thought she saw the spectre of her  
 keeper Argos, and heard the sound of the pipe with which  
 Mercury lulled all his hundred eyes to sleep.

Foodless, pursued by never-ceasing wrath.

Ah me! What child of misery ever suffer'd

Misery like mine? But tell me, clearly tell me,

What woes await me yet, what ease, what cure?

Say, if thou know'st, speak, tell a wand'ring virgin.

PRO. All, thou canst wish to learn I'll tell thee  
clearly, 606

Wrapped in no veil abstruse; but in clear terms,

As friend to friend. Thine eyes behold Prometheus,

Whose warm benevolence gave fire to men.

IO. O thou, the common blessing of mankind. 610

Wretched Prometheus, wherefore are these suffer-  
ings?

PRO. Scarce have I ceased lamenting my misfor-  
tunes.

IO. And wilt thou not allow me that sad office?

PRO. Ask what thou wilt, thou shalt learn all from  
me. 614

IO. Say then, who bound thee in that rifted rock?

PRO. The ruthless will of Jove, but Vulcan's hand

IO. In what offending art thou chasten'd thus?

PRO. Suffice it thee so much has been declared.

IO. Say then what time shall end my wretched  
wand'rings.

PRO. Better repose in ignorance than know. 620

IO. Whate'er my woes to come, hide them not  
from me.

PRO. That favour unreluctant could I grant thee.

IO. Why this delay then to declare the whole?

PRO. Ungrateful task to rend thy soul with an-  
guish. 624

IO. Regard not me more than is pleasing to me.

PRO. Conjured thus strongly I must speak. Hear  
then.

CHO. Not yet: this mournful pleasure let me  
share:

Let us first learn the story of her woes;

Her lips will teach us each sad circumstance

Of misery past; the future be thy task.

630

PRO. Vouchsafe to indulge their wish; they merit it;  
And are besides the sisters of thy father.

Nor light the recompense, when they who hear

Melt at the melancholy tale, and drop,

In pity drop, the sympathizing tear. 635

IO. Ill would excuse become me, or denial;

Take then the plain unornamented tale

Ye wish to hear; though sad the task enjoin'd,

And hard: for how relate the heaven-sent tempest

That burst upon my head, my form thus changed,

And all the weight of wo that overwhelms me? 641

Still, when retired to rest, air-bodied forms

Visit my slumbers nightly, soothing me

With gentle speech: "Bless'd maid, why hoard for  
ever

Thy virgin treasure, when the highest nuptials 645

Await thy choice? the flames of soft desire

Have touch'd the heart of Jove; he burns with love;

Disdain not, gentle virgin, ah disdain not

The couch of Jove; to Lerna's deep recess,

Where graze thy father's herds the meads along,

Go, gentle virgin, crown the god's desires." 651

The night returns, the visionary forms

Return again, and haunt my troubled soul,

Forbidding rest, till to my father's ear

I dared disclose the visions of the night. 650

To Pytho, to Dodona's vocal grove

He sent his seers, anxious to know what best

Was pleasing to the gods. Return'd they bring

Dark-utter'd answers of ambiguous sense.

At length one oracle distinct and plain 660

Pronounced its mandates, charging Inachus

To drive me from his house and from my country,

To rove at large o'er earth's extremest bounds.

Should he refuse, the vengeful bolt of Jove,

Wing'd with red flames would all his race destroy.

632 Inachus, the father of Io, was the son of Oceanus and Tethys.

Obedient to the Pythian god he drove me 666  
Unwilling from his house, himself unwilling  
Compell'd by Jove, and harsh necessity.

Straight was my sense disorder'd, my fair form  
Changed, as you see, disfigured with these horns ;  
And tortured with the bryze's horrid sting, 671

Wild with my pain, with frantic speed I hurried  
To Cenchrea's vale with silver-winding streams  
Irriguous, and the fount whence Lerna spreads  
Its wide expanse of waters ; close behind 675  
In wrathful mood walk'd Argus, earth-born herds-  
man,

With all his eyes observant of my steps.  
Him unawares a sudden fate deprived  
Of life ; while I, stung with that heaven-sent pest,  
Am driven with devious speed from land to land. 680  
Thou hast my tale. If aught of woes to come  
Thy prescient mind divines, relate them freely ;  
Nor through false pity with fallacious words  
Sooth my vain hopes ; my soul abhors as base  
The fabling tongue of glozing courtesy. 685

CHO. No more, no more ; forbear. Ah never,  
never

Conceived I that a tale so strange should reach  
My ears ; that miseries, woes, distresses, terrors,  
Dreadful to sight, intolerable to sense,  
Should shock me thus : wo, wo, unhappy fate ! 690  
How my soul shudders at the fate of Io !

PRO. Already dost thou sigh, already tremble ?  
Check these emotions till the whole is heard.

CHO. Speak, show us : to the sick some gleam of  
comfort 694

Flows from the knowledge of their pains to come.

PRO. Your first request with ease has been ob-  
tain'd ;

For from her lips you wish'd to hear the tale  
Of her afflictions. Hear the rest ; what woes  
From Juno's rage await this suff'ring virgin.  
And thou with deep attention mark my words, 700



Daughter of Inachus ; and learn from them  
 The traces of thy way. First, then, from hence  
 Turn to the orient sun, and pass the height  
 Of these uncultured mountains ; thence descend  
 To where the wandering Scythians, train'd to bear  
 The distant-wounding bow, on wheels aloft 706  
 Roll on their wattled cottages : to these  
 Approach not nigh, but turn thy devious steps  
 Along the rough verge of the murm'ring main,  
 And pass the barb'rous country : on the left 710  
 The Chalybes inhabit, whose rude hands  
 Temper the glowing steel : beware of these,  
 A savage and inhospitable race.  
 Thence shalt thou reach the banks of that proud  
 stream,  
 Which from its roaring torrent takes its name ; 715  
 But pass it not, tempt not its dangerous depths  
 Unfordable, till now thy weary steps  
 Shall reach the distant bound of Caucasus,  
 Monarch of mountains ; from whose extreme height  
 The bursting flood rolls down his power of waters.  
 Passing those star-aspiring heights, descend 721  
 Where to the south the Amazonian tents,  
 Hostile to men, stretch o'er the plain ; whose troops  
 In after-times shall near Thermodon's banks  
 Fix in Themiscyra's towers their martial rule, 725  
 Where Salmydesia points her cruel rocks,  
 And glories in her wrecks : this female train  
 With courteous zeal shall guide thee in thy way.  
 Arriving where the dark Cimmerian lake  
 Spreads from its narrow mouth its vast expanse, 730  
 Leave it, and boldly plunge thy vent'rous foot  
 In the Mæotic straits ; the voice of fame  
 Shall eternize thy passage, and from thee

713 The horrid custom of sacrificing strangers, whose ill fortune drove them on their coasts, marks the savage and inhospitable manners of these barbarians.

715 Araxes.

Call it the Bosphorus: there shalt thou quit  
 The shores of Europe, and intrepid reach 735  
 The continent of Asia.—Seems he now,  
 This tyrant of the skies, seems he in all  
 Of fierce and headlong violence, when his love  
 Plunges a mortal in such deep distresses?  
 A rugged wooer, virgin, have thy charms 740  
 Won thee; for be assured, what I have told thee  
 Is but a prelude to the woes untold.

Io. Ah miserable me!

PRO. Again that exclamation, that deep groan! 744  
 What wilt thou do, when thou shalt learn the rest?

CHO. Remains there aught of ills yet to be told?

PRO. A wide tempestuous sea of baleful woes.

Io. What then has life desirable? Why rather  
 From this rude cliff leap I not headlong down,  
 And end my woes? Better to die at once, 750  
 Than linger out a length of life in pain.

PRO. Ill wouldst thou bear my miseries, by the  
 Fates  
 Exempt from death, the refuge of the afflicted.  
 But my afflictions know no bounds, till Jove  
 Falls from the imperial sovereignty of heaven. 755

Io. Shall he then fall? Shall the time come, when  
 Jove  
 Shall sink dethroned? I think I should rejoice  
 To see the tyrant's ruin: should I not,  
 Since from his hands I suffer all these ills?

PRO. Then be thou well assured it shall be so. 760

Io. And who shall wrest the imperial sceptre from  
 him?

PRO. Himself, destroy'd by his improvident coun-  
 sels.

Io. Oh say, if harmless, what I ask, say how.

PRO. Urging a marriage he shall dearly rue.

Io. Heaven-sprung or mortal? If permitted, say.

734 Bosphorus, the passage of the heifer.

ÆSCH.—I

PRO. What matters which? It may not be disclosed. 766

IO. Shall, then, a wife deprive him of the throne?

PRO. She, greater than the sire, shall bear a son.

IO. Has he no means of power to avert this fate?

PRO. None, till from these vile chains I shall be free. 770

IO. And who, 'gainst Jove's high will, shall set thee free?

PRO. One, of necessity, from thee descended.

IO. From me! My son release thee from thy pains?

PRO. Third of thy race, first numb'ring ten descents.

IO. Oracular this, of difficult conjecture. 775

PRO. Check then thy wish, nor seek to know thy toils.

IO. Do not hold forth a grace, then snatch it from me.

PRO. Of two relations I will grant thee either.

IO. Propose the two, then leave the choice to me.

PRO. Shall I declare the rest of thy misfortunes, Or dost thou wish to know him that shall free me?

CHO. The first to her, to me this other grace 782 Vouchsafe, nor my request treat with disdain.

To her impart what toils remain; to me

Him that shall free thee: this I most desire. 785

PRO. This your request I shall not be averse To gratify, and tell you all you wish.

First for thy various wand'rings: mark my words, And grave them on the tablet of thy heart.

When thou shalt pass the flood, the common bound Of either continent, direct thy steps 791

Right to the fiery portals of the east,

The sun's bright walk, along the roaring beach,

774 From Io descended Epaphus, Libye, Belus, Danaus Hypermnestra, Abas, Proetus, Acrisius, Danae, Perseus, Electryon, Alcmena, Hercules.

Till thou shalt come to the Gorgonian plains  
 Of Cisthene, where dwell the swan-like forms 795  
 Of Phorcys' daughters, bent and white with age ;  
 One common eye have these, one common tooth,  
 And never does the sun with cheerful ray  
 Visit them darkling, nor the moon's pale orb  
 That silvers o'er the night. The Gorgons nigh, 800  
 Their sisters these, spread their broad wings, and  
 wreath

Their horrid hair with serpents, fiends abhorr'd,  
 Whom never mortal could behold, and live.  
 Be therefore warn'd, and let it profit thee  
 To learn what else detestable to sight 805  
 Lies in thy way, and dangerous. Shun the Gryphins,  
 Those dumb and rav'nous dogs of Jove. Avoid  
 The Arimaspians troops, whose frowning foreheads  
 Glare with one blazing eye ; along the banks,  
 Where Pluto rolls his streams of gold, they rein 810  
 Their foaming steeds ; approach them not, but seek  
 A land far distant, where the tawny race  
 Dwell near the fountains of the sun, and where  
 The Nigris pours his dusky waters ; wind  
 Along his banks, till thou shalt reach the fall 815  
 Where from the mountains with papyrus crown'd  
 The venerable Nile impetuous pours  
 His headlong torrent ; he shall guide thy steps  
 To those irriguous plains, whose triple sides  
 His arms surround ; there have the Fates decreed  
 Thee and thy sons to form the lengthen'd line. 821  
 Is aught imperfect, aught obscure ? Resume  
 The inquiry, and be taught with greater clearness ;  
 I have more leisure than I wish to have.

CHO. If thou hast aught remaining, aught omitted,  
 To tell her of her woful wand'ring, speak it : 826

812 The ancients placed the Ethiopians at the extremities of the earth, not only towards the south, but to the east, and also to the west ; hence they are said to dwell near the fountains of the sun.

If all has been declared, to us vouchsafe  
The grace we ask ; what, thou rememb'rest well.

PRO. Her wand'ring in full measure has she heard.  
That she may know she has not heard in vain, 830  
Her labours pass'd, ere these rude rocks she reach'd,  
Will I recite, good argument that truth  
Stamps my predictions sure : nor shall I use  
A length of words, but speak thy wand'rings briefly.  
Soon as thy foot reach'd the Molossian ground, 835  
And round Dodona's ridgy heights, where stands  
The seat oracular of Thesprotian Jove,  
And, wond'rous prodigy, the vocal groves,  
These in clear, plain, unquestionable terms,  
Hail'd thee " Illustrious wife of Jove that shall be,"  
If that may sooth thy soul. The torturing sting 841  
Thence drove thee wand'ring o'er the wave-wash'd  
strand

To the great gulf of Rhea, thence thy course  
Through the vex'd billows hither. But know this,  
In after-times shall that deep gulf from thee 845  
Be call'd the Ionian, and preserve to men  
The memory of thy passage. This to thee,  
Proving the prescience of my mind, that sees  
More than appears : the rest to you and her,  
Resuming my discourse, I speak in common. 850  
On the land's extreme verge a city stands,  
Canobus, proudly elevate, nigh where the Nile  
Rolls to the sea his rich stream : there shall Jove  
Heal thy distraction, and with gentle hand  
Sooth thee to peace. Of his high race a son, 855  
The dusky Epaphus, shall rise, and rule  
The wide-extended land o'er which the Nile  
Pours his broad waves. In the fifth line from him  
Fifty fair sisters shall return to Argos  
Unwillingly, to fly the kindred beds 860  
Of fifty brothers ; these with eager speed,  
Swift as the falcon's flight when he pursues  
The dove at hand, shall follow, nor obtain  
The nuptials, which the indignant gods deny.

These shall Pelasgia see by female hands 865  
 Welt'ring in gore, the night's convenient gloom  
 Fav'ring the daring deed; each female draws  
 The trenchant sword, and in her husband's blood  
 Stains the broad blade. Thus fatal to my foes  
 Be love! Yet one shall feel its softer flame 870  
 Melting her soul, and from the general carnage  
 Preserve her husband, choosing to be deem'd  
 Of base degenerate spirit, rather than stain  
 Her gentle hands with blood. From her shall Argos  
 Receive a long imperial line of kings. 875  
 The full distinct relation would be tedious.  
 From her shall rise the hero, strong to wing  
 The dreaded shaft; he from these torturing pains  
 Shall set me free: this my age-honour'd mother,  
 Titanian Themis, with oracular voice 880  
 Foretold; but when, or how, requires a length  
 Of narrative, which known would naught avail thee.  
 Ah me! Ah wretched me! That pang again!  
 Again that fiery pang, whose madd'ning smart  
 Corrodes and rankles in my breast! With fear 885  
 My heart pants thick; wildly my eyeballs roll;  
 Distraction drives my hurried steps a length  
 Of weary wand'rings; my ungovern'd tongue  
 Utters tumultuous ravings, that roll high  
 The floods of passion swoln with horrid woes. 890

PROMETHEUS, CHORUS.

CHORUS.

STROPHE.

Was it not Wisdom's sovereign power  
 That beam'd her brightest, purest flame,  
 To illume her sage's soul the thought to frame,  
 And clothe with words his heaven-taught love?  
 "Whoe'er thou art, whom young desire 895  
 Shall lead to Hymen's holy fire,

893 This sage was Pittacus of Mitylene, one of the seven celebrated wise men of Greece.

Choose, from thy equals choose thy humble love :  
 Let not thy pomp of wealth allure thine eye,  
 Nor high-traced lineage thy ambition move ;  
 Ill suits with low degree to aspire so high." 900

## ANTISTROPHE.

Never, O never may my fate  
 See me a splendid victim led  
 To grace the mighty Jove's imperial bed,  
 Or share a god's magnific state.  
 When Io's miseries meet my eyes, 905  
 What horrors in my soul arise !  
 Her virgin bosom, harb'ring high intent,  
 In man delights not, and his love disdains ;  
 Hence the dire pest by wrathful Juno sent,  
 Her wide wild wand'rings hence, and agonizing  
 pains. 910

## EPODE.

Me less ambitious thoughts engage,  
 And love within my humbler sphere :  
 Hence my soul rests in peace secure from fear,  
 Secure from danger's threat'ning rage.  
 Me may the powers that rule the sky 915  
 Ne'er view with love's resistless eye :  
 Ah, never be the unequal conflict mine,  
 To strive with their inextricable love :  
 Might not my heart against itself combine ?  
 Or how escape the powerful arts of Jove ? 920

Pro. Yet shall this Jove, with all his self-will'd  
 pride,  
 Learn humbler thoughts, taught by that fatal marriage,  
 Which from the lofty throne of sovereign rule  
 Shall sink him to a low and abject state,  
 And on his head fulfil his father's curse, 925  
 The curse of Saturn, vented in that hour  
 When from his ancient royalty he fell.  
 Of all the gods not one, myself except,  
 Can warn him of his fate, and how to shun  
 The impending ruin. I know all, and how. 930  
 Let him then sit, and glorying in his height

Roll with his red right hand his volleyed thunder,  
 Falsely secure, and wreath his bick'ring flames.  
 Yet naught shall they avail him, nor prevent  
 His abject and dishonourable fall. 935  
 Such rival adversary forms he now  
 Against himself prodigious in his might,  
 And unassailable ; whose rage shall roll  
 Flames that surpass his lightnings, fiercer bolts  
 That quash his thunders ; and from Neptune's hand  
 Dash his trined mace, that from the bottom stirs 941  
 The troubled sea, and shakes the solid earth.  
 Crush'd with this dreadful ruin shall he learn  
 How different to command, and to obey.

CHO. Thy ominous tongue gives utterance to thy  
 wish. 945

PRO. It is my wish, and shall be ratified.

CHO. What, shall high Jove bend to a greater  
 lord ?

PRO. And to a yoke more galling stoop his neck.

CHO. Dost thou not fear, vaunting this bold dis-  
 course ?

PRO. What should I fear, by Fate exempt from  
 death ? 950

CHO. But he may add fresh tortures to thy pain.

PRO. Let him then add them ; I await them all.

CHO. Wise they who reverence the stern power  
 of vengeance.

PRO. Go then, with prompt servility fall down  
 Before your lord, fawn, cringe, and sue for grace.  
 For me, I value him at less than nothing. 956

Let him exert his brief authority,  
 And lord it while he may ; his power in heaven  
 Shall vanish soon, nor leave a trace behind.—  
 But see, his messenger hastes on amain, 960  
 The obsequious lackey of this new-made monarch ;  
 He comes, I ween, the bearer of fresh tidings.

MERCURY, PROMETHEUS, CHORUS.

MER. To thee grown old in craft, deep drench'd  
 in gall,



Disgustful to the gods, too prodigal  
 Of interdicted gifts to mortal man, 965  
 Thief of the fire of Heaven, to thee my message.  
 My father bids thee say what nuptials these  
 Thy tongue thus vaunts as threat'ning his high  
                   power;

And clearly say, couch'd in no riddling phrase,  
 Each several circumstance; propound not to me  
 Ambiguous terms, Prometheus; for thou seest 971  
 Jove brooks not such, unfit to win his favour.

PRO. Thou doest thy message proudly, in high  
                   terms,

Becoming well the servant of such lords.  
 Your youthful power is new; yet vainly deem ye  
 Your high-raised towers impregnable to pain: 976  
 Have I not seen two sovereigns of the sky  
 Sink from their glorious state? And I shall see  
 A third, this present lord, with sudden ruin  
 Dishonourably fall. What! seem I now 980  
 To dread, to tremble at these new-raised gods?  
 That never shall their force extort from me.  
 Hence then, the way thou camest return with speed;  
 Thy vain inquiries get no other answer.

MER. Such insolence before, so fiery fierce, 985  
 Drew on thy head this dreadful punishment.

PRO. My miseries, be assured, I would not change  
 For thy gay servitude, but rather choose  
 To live a vassal to this dreary rock,  
 Than lackey the proud heels of Jove. These words,  
 If insolent, your insolence extorts. 991

MER. I think thou art delighted with thy woes.

PRO. Delighted! Might I see mine enemies  
 Delighted thus! And thee I hold among them.

MER. And why blame me for thy calamities? 995

PRO. To tell thee, in a word, I hate them all,  
 These gods; of them I deserved well, and they  
 Ungrateful and unjust work me these ills.

977 Ouranus dethroned by his son Saturn, and Saturn by his  
 son Jupiter.

**MER.** Thy malady, I find, is no small madness.

**PRO.** If to detest my enemies be madness, 1000  
It is a malady I wish to have.

**MER.** Were it well with thee, who could brook thy pride ?

**PRO.** Ah me !

**MER.** That sound of grief Jove doth not know.

**PRO.** Time, as its age advanceth, teaches all things.

**MER.** All its advances have not taught thee wisdom. 1005

**PRO.** I should not else waste words on thee, a vassal.

**MER.** Naught wilt thou answer then to what Jove asks ?

**PRO.** If due, I would repay his courtesy.

**MER.** Why am I check'd, why rated as a boy ?

**PRO.** A boy thou art, more simple than a boy, 1010  
If thou hast hopes to be inform'd by me.

Not all his tortures, all his arts shall move me  
To unlock my lips, till this cursed chain be loosed.  
No, let him hurl his flaming lightnings, wing  
His whitening snows, and with his thunders shake  
The rocking earth ; they move not me to say 1015  
What force shall wrest the sceptre from his hand.

**MER.** Weigh these things well, will these unloose thy chains ?

**PRO.** Well have they long been weigh'd, and well consider'd.

1017 Jupiter beheld the charms of Thetis, daughter of Oceanus, with the eye of a lover, and intended to advance her as his consort to the imperial throne of heaven. Now it was in the Fates that this goddess should have a son, who was to be greater than his father. Prometheus alone, by his divine foresight, could open the danger of Jupiter ; but this he firmly refused to do, till he should be released from the rock. After that Hercules, by the permission of Jupiter, had killed the tormenting eagle, and unbound his chains, he disclosed the decree of the Fates : Thetis was given in marriage to Peleus, and the prophecy was accomplished in the famous Achilles.

**MER.** Subdue, vain fool, subdue thy insolence,  
And let thy miseries teach thee juster thoughts. 1021

**PRO.** Thy counsels, like the waves that dash  
against

The rock's firm base, disquiet but not move me.  
Conceive not of me that, through fear what Jove  
May in his rage inflict, my fix'd disdain 1025  
Shall e'er relent, e'er suffer my firm mind  
To sink to womanish softness, to fall prostrate,  
To stretch my supplicating hands, entreating  
My hated foe to free me from these chains.  
Far be that shame, that abject weakness from me.

**MER.** I see thou art implacable, unsoften'd 1031  
By all the mild entreaties I can urge ;  
But like a young steed rein'd, that proudly struggles,  
And champs his iron curb, thy haughty soul  
Abates not of its unavailing fierceness. 1035

But pride, disdaining to be ruled by reason,  
Sinks weak and valueless. But mark me well,  
If not obedient to my words, a storm,  
A fiery and inevitable deluge, 1039

Shall burst in threefold vengeance on thy head.  
First, his fierce thunder wing'd with lightning flames  
Shall rend this rugged rock, and cover thee  
With hideous rain : long time shalt thou lie  
Astonied in its rifted sides, till dragg'd

Again to light ; then shall the bird of Jove, 1045  
The rav'ning eagle, lured with scent of blood,  
Mangle thy body, and each day returning,  
An uninvited guest, plunge his fell beak,  
And feast and riot on thy black'ning liver.

Expect no pause, no respite, till some god 1050  
Comes to relieve thy pains, willing to pass  
The dreary realms of ever-during night,  
The dark descent of Tartarus profound.

Weigh these things well : this is no fiction dress'd  
In vaunting terms, but words of serious truth. 1055  
The mouth of Jove knows not to utter falsehood,  
But what he speaks is fate. Be cautious, then,

Regard thyself ; let not o'erweening pride  
Despise the friendly voice of prudent counsel.

CHO. Nothing amiss we deem his words, but  
fraught 1060

With reason, who but wills thee to relax  
Thy haughty spirit, and by prudent counsels  
Pursue thy peace : be then advised ; what shame  
For one so wise to persevere in error ?

PRO. All this I knew ere he declared his mes-  
sage. 1065

That enemy from enemy should suffer  
Extreme indignity is nothing strange.  
Let him then work his horrible pleasure on me ;  
Wreath his black curling flames, tempest the air  
With volleyed thunders and wild warring winds, 1070  
Rend from its roots the firm earth's solid base,  
Heave from the roaring main its boisterous waves,  
And dash them to the stars ; me let him hurl,  
Caught in the fiery tempest, to the gloom  
Of deepest Tartarus ; not all his power 1075  
Can quench the ethereal breath of life in me.

MER. Such ravings, such wild counsels might you  
hear,  
From moon-struck madness. What is this but mad-  
ness ?

Were he at ease, would he abate his phrensy ? 1079  
But you, whose gentle hearts with social sorrow  
Melt at his suff'rings, from this place remove,  
Remove with speed, lest the tempestuous roar  
Of his fierce thunder strike your souls with horror.

CHO. To other themes, to other counsels turn  
Thy voice, where pleaded reason may prevail : 1085  
This is ill-urged, and may not be admitted.  
Wouldst thou solicit me to deeds of baseness ?  
Whate'er betides, with him will I endure it.  
The vile betrayer I have learn'd to hate ;  
There is no fouler stain, my soul abhors it. 1090

MER. Remember you are warn'd : if ill o'ertake  
you,

Accuse not Fortune ; lay not the blame on Jove,  
As by his hand sunk in calamities  
Unthought of, unforeseen ; no, let the blame  
Light on yourselves ; your folly not unwarn'd, 1095  
Not unawares, but 'gainst your better knowledge,  
Involved you in the inextricable toils.

PRO. He fables not ; I feel in very deed  
The firm earth rock ; the thunder's deep'ning roar  
Rolls with redoubled rage ; the bick'ring flames 1100  
Flash thick ; the eddyng sands are whirl'd on high ;  
In dreadful opposition the wild winds  
Rend the vex'd air ; the boist'rous billows rise  
Confounding sea and sky ; the impetuous storm  
Rolls all its terrible fury on my head. 1105  
Seest thou this, awful Themis ; and thou, Ether,  
Through whose pure azure floats the general stream  
Of liquid light, see you what wrongs I suffer ?

# **THE SUPPLICANTS.**

**DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.**

**DANAUS,**

**PELASGUS,**

**HERALD,**

**CHORUS, the Daughters of Danaus.**

## THE SUPPLICANTS.

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### ARGUMENT.

**DANAUS** and **Ægyptus**, sons of **Belus**, are joint sovereigns of **Egypt**; and the daughters of the former accompany their father in a voluntary flight from their native country, in order to avoid the urgent solicitations of their cousins, who are desirous of obtaining their consent to a matrimonial alliance—The aged monarch and the distressed ladies at length arrive at **Argos**, where they receive the protection of king **Pelagus** and his subjects—The herald of **Ægyptus** arrives shortly after to claim the fugitives, but is compelled to relinquish his purpose and return home; while the **Argives** prepare to vindicate the rights of hospitality by vigorous preparations for defence against the hostile incursions of an expected **Egyptian** armament.

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### CHORUS.

**PROTECTOR** of the suppliant, gracious **Jove**,  
Look with an eye of pity on this train,  
Which from the gentle depths of **Nile** have sped  
Their naval enterprise. Those sacred fields,  
That border on the **Syrian** wastes, we leave, 5  
Not by the public voice of justice doom'd  
For blood, but willing fugitives from youths  
Too near allied, whose impious love would raise  
Perforce the nuptial bed by us abhorr'd;  
Sons of **Ægyptus** they. Our father **Danaus**, 10  
On whose authority we build our counsels,  
And strengthen our abhorrence, plann'd these measures,  
And wrought us to this honourable toil,  
To wing our swift flight o'er the billowy main,  
And reach the shores of **Argos**, whence we draw 15



Our vaunted lineage, from the embrace of Jove  
 Enamour'd of that virgin ; whom, transformed,  
 The torturing sting drove wand'ring o'er the world.  
 To what more friendly region can we take  
 Our progress, bearing in our suppliant hands 20  
 These peaceful branches crown'd with sacred  
 wreaths.

Ye royal towers, thou earth, and ye fair streams  
 Of orient crystal, ye immortal gods  
 In the high heavens enthroned, ye awful powers  
 That deep beneath hold your tremendous seats, 25  
 Jove the Preserver, guardian of the roof  
 Where dwells the pious man, receive your suppli-  
 ants,

Breathe o'er these realms your favourable spirit,  
 And form them to receive this female train !  
 But for those men, that proud injurious band 30  
 Sprung from Ægyptus, ere they fix their foot  
 On this moist shore, drive them into the deep,  
 With all their flying streamers and quick oars,  
 There let them meet the whirlwind's boist'rous rage,  
 Thund'rings, and lightnings, and the furious blasts  
 That harrow up the wild tempestuous waves, 36  
 And perish in the storm, ere they ascend  
 Our kindred bed, and seize against our will  
 What nature and the laws of blood deny.

To thee, the avenging power 40  
 Adored beyond the waves of this wide main,  
 Raise we the solemn strain,  
 Her progeny, that cropp'd each various flower  
 Which deck'd the fragrant mead,  
 Till Jove's soft touch her alter'd shape caress'd, 45  
 And soothed her soul to rest :  
 Thereto we add thy fate-appointed name,  
 Epaphus of mighty fame,  
 To thee we raise the strain, while now we tread

17 Io, the daughter of Inachus

Thy revered mother's fertile soil, 50  
And record each various toil;  
Now shall each trace to light be brought,  
Though far surpassing human thought;  
Now shall the wondrous tale unfold,  
Mysterious deeds of times of old. 55

Dwells in this land some augur near?  
If these sad wailings reach his ear,  
Will he not deem the mournful note  
Warbled from Philomela's throat,  
Such time as from the falcon's wing 60  
She leaves her fav'rite haunt and spring,  
And o'er her nest and o'er her young  
Attunes her sweetest, saddest song;

And in the melancholy strain  
Laments the fate of Itys slain: 65  
In sullen rage the mother stands,  
And in her son's blood bathes her hands.

In notes so sweet, so sad, I try  
To raise the Ionian harmony;  
And rend these cheeks, that ripening drew 70  
On Nile's warm banks their vermeil hue;

While at each solemn, pensive pause  
My bursting heart the deep sigh draws,  
And, wo-betrothed, fears ev'n its friends;  
If yet, perchance, one friend attends, 75  
For that our sails the deep explore,  
Leaving our native dusky shore.

Ye gods, from whom we proudly trace  
The glories of our high-born race,  
Hear us, ye powers, propitious hear, 80  
And show that justice is your care;

Guard in our just, our holy cause  
The sanctity of Nature's laws;  
You, that abhor each impious deed,  
Arise, protect the nuptial bed. 85

When Mars to slaughter gives the reins,  
And rages o'er the ensanguined plains.

To each that flies the altar gives  
 A refuge, and the suppliant lives,  
 For Jove, with pious prayers adored, 90  
 Commands stern war to drop the sword.

Jove's firm decree, though wrapp'd in night  
 Beams 'mid the gloom a constant light ;  
 Man's fate obscure in darkness lies,  
 Not to be pierced by mortal eyes : 95  
 The just resolves of his high mind  
 A glorious consummation find ;  
 Though in majestic state enthroned  
 Thick clouds and dark enclose him round,  
 As from the tower of heaven his eye 100  
 Surveys bold man's impiety ;  
 Till, his ripe wrath on vengeance bent,  
 He arms each god for punishment,  
 And from his high and holy throne 105  
 Sends all his awful judgments down,  
 And may his eye our wrongs survey,  
 Mark'd by insulting man his prey ;  
 As each bold youth by passion fired  
 Against our bosom-peace conspired,  
 And to deceit's smooth influence 110  
 Join'd rude and boist'rous violence :  
 An infant forest these, that shoot  
 Their wild growth from one parent root,  
 And o'er our fresh bloom strive to spread  
 Their cheerless and malignant shade. 115  
 Thus I attune my notes of wo,  
 And bid the varied measures flow ;  
 Now the shrilling descant chase,  
 Now solemn sink the deep'ning bass ;  
 Thus bid the warbled cadence 'plain 120  
 And steep in tears the mournful strain ;  
 A strain to grace my obsequies,  
 While yet I view yon golden skies.

Ye rising hills that crown this shore,  
 Where Apis reign'd in years of yore, 125

Propitious hear me, nor disdain  
To let your echoes learn this strain ;  
Barbaric though my voice and rude,  
Well may its notes be understood ;  
Barbaric though this purpled stole, 130  
Frowned around with linen roll :  
This blushing veil though Sidon gave,  
Ye hills of Apis, hear, and save !

The vow perform'd, the gods atoned,  
The pious rites with blessings crown'd, 135  
Death distant waits with slacken'd pace,  
Nor dares profane the sacred place.  
But will he now his foot repress ?  
Will the kind gods their votary bless ?  
Ah me ! these swelling waves of wo, 140  
Whither, ah whither will they flow ?

Ye rising hills that crown this shore,  
Where Apis reigned in years of yore,  
Propitious hear me, nor disdain  
To let your echoes learn this strain ; 145  
Barbaric though my voice and rude,  
Well may its notes be understood ;  
Barbaric though this purpled stole,  
Frowned around with linen roll :  
This blushing veil though Sidon gave, 150  
Ye hills of Apis, hear, and save !

The dashing oar, the swelling sail,  
That caught the favourable gale,  
Safe from the storms, nor I complain  
Wafted our frail bark o'er the main. 155  
All-seeing sovereign sire, defend,  
And guide us to a prosperous end ;  
Save us, O save the seed divine  
Of our great mother's sacred line ;  
From man's rude touch O save us free, 160  
And help ensnared chastity !

Thou, virgin daughter of high Jove,  
 A virgin's vows hear and approve ;  
 Holding thy sober awful state,  
 Protect us from the touch we hate ; 165  
 From bold incontinence secure,  
 Pure thyself, preserve us pure ;  
 Save us, O save the seed divine  
 Of our great mother's sacred line ;  
 From man's rude touch O save us free 170  
 And help ensnared chastity !

If not, this glowing train that trace,  
 From heaven's high king their high-born race,  
 Shall voluntary victims go  
 To the all-receiving realms below ; 175  
 To their dread gods for refuge fly,  
 If heaven's high powers their aid deny.

O sovereign Jove, shall wrath divine  
 For Io still pursue her line ?  
 Still thy dread queen in fury rise, 180  
 And in her cause arm all the skies ?  
 She wings these winds, this tempest spreads,  
 That bursts in vengeance o'er our heads.  
 O sovereign Jove, for this thy ear  
 No meed of grateful voice shall hear ; 185  
 Thy son dishonour'd whom of yore  
 To thee disfigured Io bore.  
 Turn then, O turn thy gracious eye,  
 And hear us from thy throne on high !

## DANAUS, CHORUS.

DAN. Daughters, this hour demands your utmost  
 prudence ; 190  
 Your father's care, your old and faithful pilot,  
 Hath held your helm safe o'er the dangerous deep ;  
 Behooves you now at land with provident heed  
 To form your counsels, and attentive mark  
 My words. Yon cloud of dust, though tongueless,  
 speaks 195  
 An army nigh ; I hear their wheels of brass

Loud rattling on their axles ; now I view  
 Chariots and horse distinct, and shields and spears  
 Far gleaming o'er the plain ; the lords perchance  
 That rule these realms, informed of our arrival, 200  
 Advance to us ; but bring they minds of peace,  
 Guiltless of violence, or with ruthless rage  
 Rush on this train, best sit together, virgins,  
 Around this altar sacred to the gods  
 Presiding o'er the games : a surer refuge 205  
 Than tower or shield war-proof an altar gives.  
 Go then with speed, and reverent in your hands  
 Hold forth these supplicating branches crown'd  
 With snowy wreaths, ensigns of awful Jove.  
 With modest. grave, and decent speech receive 210  
 These strangers, as beseems the wretched state  
 Of unknown supplicants ; declare at once,  
 Distinct and brief, the motives of your flight,  
 Unstain'd with blood : let not your roving eye  
 Dart the bold glance impeaching modesty 215  
 Be not thy voice heard first, nor let its answers  
 Weary their ear ; they quickly take offence ;  
 Submissive urge thy plea, rememb'ring well  
 The pride of words ill suits thy low estate,  
 A fugitive, a stranger in distress. 220

CHO. Wise are thy counsels, and with reverend  
 heed

Shall be remembered, father ; and may Jove,  
 The author of our race, look gracious on us.

DAN. Quick be his aid, strong guardian of our cause.

CHO. Thus near I choose my seat.

DAN. Supreme of gods,

Pity our suff'rings, pity ere we perish. 226

CHO. Look with an eye of mercy on thy suppliants,  
 Impart thy grace, and bless us with success.

DAN. Address you now this crested bird of Jove.

CHO. Thee, radiant Sun, thy tutelary rays 230  
 Streaming with gold, sacred Apollo, god

229 The Grecians worshipped the cock as sacred to Apollo,  
 because he announces the rising of the sun.

Once exiled from the skies, to thee I call,  
Look on our woes, and pity wretched mortals.

DAN. O succour us, assist us, gracious power.

CHO. Whom of these gods, whom yet shall we  
invoke? 235

DAN. Mark you this trident? It declares the god.

CHO. Safe hast thou brought us o'er the swelling  
sea;

Receive us, then, and save us on the shore.

DAN. This, in the Grecian rites, is Mercury.

CHO. Nothing but good announce thou to the free.

DAN. This common altar, sacred to these gods, 241

Approach with awe; the ground is holy; sit

Like turtles trembling at the falcon's flight,

The winged foe of all the winged race,

Polluter of his kind; for how can bird 245

That preys on bird be pure? Or how can man

That from the unwilling father drags to marriage

The unwilling daughter, how can he be chaste?

Or shall the haughty deed ev'n after death

Escape unpunish'd in the realms below? 250

No: for another Jove, they say, holds there

His awful seat, and to the guilty dead

Awards just vengeance. But be wary, try

The sanctity of the place: and may it bring

The blessing of success to crown your hopes. 255

PELASGUS, DANAUS, CHORUS.

PEL. What female train address we here, and  
whence,

Gorgeously vested in barbaric stoles

That float in many a fold? Our Argos sees not

Her daughters thus array'd, nor Greece through all

232 Apollo was fabled to have been banished from heaven,  
because he killed the thunder-forging Cyclops.

251 Not only the heavens, but the sea, and even the infernal  
regions, had each their Jupiter; wherefore this god had an  
image among the Argives with three eyes, to denote his power  
over those three regions, which the ancient mythology has  
divided between the three sons of Saturn.

Its states. That thus without some previous herald,  
 The public hospitality not ask'd 261  
 Without safe-conduct you have boldly ventured  
 To land upon our coasts, this is most strange.  
 Only these boughs, as supplicants are wont,  
 You lay before these gods that o'er the games 265  
 Preside ; hence Greece forms one conjecture only,  
 Of all besides uncertain what to think,  
 Till your distinct relation clears our doubts.

CHO. As to our habits, thy remarks are just.  
 But how should I address thee, as a man 270  
 Of private station, or with hallow'd charge  
 Presiding here, or chieftain of the state ?

PEL. Nay, answer me, and speak with confidence ;  
 Pelasgus bids you, sovereign of this land :  
 My sire Palæcthon, of high ancestry 275  
 Original with this earth : from me, their king,  
 The people take their name, and boast themselves  
 Pelasgians. O'er a wide extent of land,  
 Through which the Algeus flows, and Strymon west,  
 From the Perrhæbians o'er the sacred heights 280  
 Of Pindus, to Pæonia, and beyond  
 The mountains of Dodona, spacious realms,  
 My empire stretches, bounded by the sea  
 This way. In ancient times the Apian plains  
 From Apis drew their honour'd name, the son 285  
 Of Phœbus, in his father's healing arts  
 Skill'd : from Naupactus came the heaven-taught  
 sage,

And clear'd the land of that pestiferous brood,  
 Which the moist earth, foul with corrupted gore,  
 Of old engender'd, fierce with dragon rage, 290  
 A cruel neighbourhood ; their horrible pride  
 The matchless Apis quell'd, and freed the land  
 Of Argos. Hence in sacred reverence  
 We hold his memory. Instructed thus,  
 Say on, declare your race, and aught besides : 295  
 But know we brook not the long pomp of words.

CHO. Brief will I be, and plain. Of Argive race



We boast ourselves, and draw our vaunted lineage  
From her, the lowing mother, in her son 299  
Supremely bless'd. All this my words shall prove.

PEL. Unplausible your tale, Can it be, strangers,  
That you're of Argive race? Liker, I ween,  
The Libyan damsels, in no wise resembling  
Our daughters: such perchance the Nile might rear,  
Such in the glowing tint the artist's hand 305  
Might mark the Colchian dame; and such, I hear,  
The wand'ring Indians, mounted on their camels,  
Along the tented plains outstretching wide  
To Ethiopia's cities: such the troops  
Of warlike Amazons: and were your hands 310  
Armed with the polished bow, I might conjecture  
You were of these; therefore I thirst to know  
More fully, how you are of Argive race.

CHO. Fame speaks of Io, in this Argive land  
The sacred guardian of the fane of Juno. 315  
Her, as the common voice loudly reports—

PEL. Reports it that the Thunderer, of her charms  
Enamour'd, with a mortal mixed the god?

CHO. And met in secret shades, conceal'd from Juno

PEL. How ended then the bickerings of these  
powers? 320

CHO. The Argive queen transform'd her to a  
heifer.

PEL. What angry measures formed his royal con-  
sort?

CHO. A herdsman she assigned starr'd round with  
eyes.

PEL. What herdsman this, and how starred round  
with eyes? 324

CHO. The earth-born Argus: but him Hermes slew.

PEL. What new device to vex the wretched heifer?

CHO. A winged pest, armed with a horrid sting:  
Those on the banks of Nile call it the brize.

PEL. And drove her in long wand'rings from this  
land. 329

CHO. Thy words, according well, speak this for me.

PEL. Reach'd she Canobus, and the walls of Memphis ?

CHO. There Jove with gentle hand soothed her to rest ;

There planted his illustrious progeny.

PEL. Who from this heifer boasts his race divine ?

CHO. Hence Epaphus received his name ; from him Libya, whose fair domains extended wide. 336

PEL. What other branch sprung from this mighty root ?

CHO. Belus, the father of two sons ; my sire, Behold, is one.

PEL. Declare the sage's name.

CHO. Danaus : his brother, whom by name they call 340

Ægyptus, is the sire of fifty sons.

Thus have I shown thee our high ancestry ;

Protect us then, support an Argive train.

PEL. You seem indeed to draw your origin Of old from hence ; but say, how have you dared 345 To leave your father's house ? What chance constrained you ?

CHO. King of Pelasgia, various are the ills Of mortal man ; and never mayst thou see Misfortune mounting on the self-same wing. Who would have thought we should have wing'd our flight 350

Thus unexpected to the coast of Argos, Allied of old, amazement in our van, And strong abhorrence of the nuptial bed !

PEL. Why, say'st thou, fly you to these gods for refuge, Holding these fresh-cropp'd branches crown'd with wreaths ? 355

CHO. That to the offspring of Ægyptus we Might not be slaves.

PEL. Whence this reluctance, say, From hate ? Or do your laws forbid such nuptials ?

ÆSCH.—L

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CHO. And who would wish to make their friends  
their lords? 359

PEL. Yet thus the strength of families gains force.

CHO. And to the wretched death is not unwelcome.

PEL. In what would you engage my honour to you?

CHO. Not to inthral us to Ægyptus' sons,  
Should they demand us.

PEL. Arduous is the task  
Thou wouldst enjoin me, to provoke new wars. 365

CHO. O'er him that succours Justice holds her  
shield.

PEL. If from the first the cause were my concern.

CHO. Revere these gods, the guardians of your  
state.

Encircled with this supplicating train.

PEL. Struck with religious horror I behold 370  
These branches shade this consecrated seat.

CHO. Dread then the wrath of Jove, who guards  
the suppliant.

Son of Palæcthon, hear me : with a heart  
Prompt to relieve, King of Pelasgia, hear.  
Behold me suppliant, an exile, wand'ring, 375  
Like the poor lamb, that on the craggy steep  
Raises her mournful voice, secure of help,  
And warns her faithful keeper of her danger.

PEL. I see a stranger train, with boughs new-  
pluck'd  
Shading these gods that o'er the games preside. 380  
May their arrival, though now strangers here,  
Yet hence descended, bring no dread event ;  
Nor from this sudden, unexpected hap  
Let war, which least we wish, disturb our state.

CHO. May Themis, guardian of the suppliant,  
sprung 385  
From powerful Jove, look on our harmless flight.  
Nor from a younger let thy age disdain  
To learn the reverence due to supplicants,

From whose pure hands the fav'ring gods accept  
The grateful offering.

PEL. Make not your request 390  
To me in private : if pollution stains  
The public state, the public has the charge  
To expiate that stain : nor can my voice,  
Ere consultation with the people held,  
Warrant the sanction of the public faith. 395

CHO. Thou art the state, the public thou ; thy  
voice,  
Superior to control, confirms the sanction  
This altar gives ; thy sole authority,  
High-sceptred monarch of a sovereign throne,  
Is here obey'd : religion's voice pleads for us ; 400  
Revere it, nor profane these hallow'd seats.

PEL. That profanation to mine enemies.  
To grant you my protection cannot be  
But with much danger ; to reject your prayers  
Humanity forbids : perplex'd, I fear 405  
To act or not to act, and fix my choice.

CHO. On heaven's high throne he sits whose  
watchful eye  
Regards the afflicted, when unfeeling pride  
Denies that justice which the law asks for them.  
Reverence his power ; for when the sufferer groans  
With pangs unpitied, the fix'd wrath of Jove, 411  
Protector of the suppliant, burns severe.

PEL. If by your country's laws Ægyptus' sons,  
As next of blood, assert a right in you,  
Who should oppose them ? It behooves thee,  
then, 415

By your own laws to prove such claim unjust.

CHO. Ah ! never may I be perforce a thrall  
To man ! By heaven-directed flight I break  
The wayward plan of these detested nuptials.  
Arm Justice on thy side, and with her aid 420  
Judge with that sanctity the gods demand.

PEL. No easy province : make not me your judge.  
Great though my power, it is not mine to act,

I told thee so, without my people's voice  
 Assenting ; lest, if ill arise, they say, 425  
 "By honouring strangers thou hast undone thy  
 country."

CHO. Each equally allied, impartial Jove  
 Weighs each in equal balance ; but repays  
 The impious deed with vengeance, to the just  
 Rewards their sanctity. Why grieveest thou, then,  
 To emulate the god, and act with justice ? 431

PÆL. Matter of high import hast thou proposed,  
 Which not admits heady and fitful rashness,  
 But deep deliberation, provident care,  
 Wisely attentive to the general weal. 435  
 That hence no evil rise, but the event  
 Be prosp'rous found, first, to the state and me ;  
 Next, that no force arrest you here, nor we  
 Betray you refuged in these hallow'd seats,  
 The hostages of Heaven, and on our heads 440  
 Call ruin and the vengeance of the gods ;  
 That ev'n in death acquits not. Seems not this  
 Matter of deep debate, and public care ?

## CHORUS.

Deliberate then with prudent care :  
 To thy counsels take with thee 445  
 Heaven-commercing piety,  
 And be steadfast justice near.  
 Hark ! methinks I hear them say,  
 Do not, mighty king, betray  
 Wretched exiles, wand'ring far. 450  
 See me hot with ruffian hand,  
 Refug'd at this shrine, profaned,  
 Learn what boist'rous man may dare.  
 See me not with ruffled vest,  
 Rent unseemly from my breast, 455  
 Loose my tresses waving round,  
 Bridled with this golden brede,  
 Led, like a reluctant steed,  
 From the gods that guard this ground.

See each hallow'd image here, 460

And the awful powers revere :

At thy feet thy suppliant laid,

Mighty monarch, hear and aid !

And know, to thee, thy house, thy rising race

Impartial justice shall repay the deed ; 465

With glory's radiant crown thy virtues grace,

And righteous Jove shall sanctify the meed.

PEL. Well ; I have paused, and pondered ; but  
each thought

Tells me the fluctuating tide perforce

Will drive me on a war with these, or those ; 470

And, like a ship with all its anchors out,

I must abide the storm : nor will this end

Without calamity, and loss, and wo.

When the rich house in desolation sinks,

Its wealth all wasted, bounteous Jove may raise 475

Its splendour to outshine its former state :

Or when the haughty tongue unseemly bolts

The bitter taunt that stings the anguish'd heart,

The balm of honey'd words may heal the wound.

But kindred blood to reek upon the dust— 480

No : let the altars blaze, and each due rite

Propitiate ev'ry god to avert the ill.

Meanwhile I keep aloof, wishing to appear

Ignorant of these disputes : and may the event

Be fortunate beyond my expectation. 485

CHO. Hear the last words of desperate modesty.

PEL. Have I not heard ? Speak on, I will  
attend.

CHO. Seest thou these braided zones that bind our  
robes ?

PEL. Ornaments these that suit your female  
state.

CHO. Know then the honest purpose these shall  
serve. 490

PEL. What would thy words intend ? Explain  
thyself.

CHO. If honour shall not guard this female train—

PEL. How can these binding zones secure your safety ?

CHO. Hanging new trophies on these images.

PEL. Mysterious are thy words ; speak plainly to me. 495

CHO. To tell thee plainly, then, I mean ourselves.

PEL. I hear the language of an anguish'd heart.

CHO. Be sure of that ; I speak our firm resolves.

PEL. On ev'ry side inevitable ills

Surround me, like a flood, whose dang'rous surge 500  
Drives me into a vast and gulfy sea,

Where no kind harbour shelters from the storm.

Should I not yield you refuge, thou hast named

A deed of horror not to be surpassed :

If with Ægyptus' sons, whose veins are rich 505

With kindred blood, before our walls I try

The chance of war ; what else but bitter loss

Can be the event, when in a woman's cause

Men shed their warm blood on the embattled plain !

Yet strong constraint compels me to revere 510

The wrath of Jove, whose hospitable power

Protects the suppliant, awfully severe.

And thou, age-honour'd father of these virgins,

Take in thy hands these boughs, place them with  
speed

On other altars of our country gods ; 515

That all the citizens may see the signs

Of your arrival ; but of me, be sure,

Speak not a word : for this free people love

To tax authority with blame. Some eye

Perchance may melt with pity, and abhor 520

The boist'rous force of these injurious men ;

Hence shall you find more favour from the people ;

For nature prompts to succour the distress'd.

DAN. This reverend, this benevolent regard

To strangers we receive with grateful honour. 525

But from thy train send with me some to attend,

To guide me to the altars of your gods,

The guardians of your state, and to their shrines,

With safety through your streets ; for much unlike  
 Our form, our garb to yours ; nor does our Nile 530  
 See on its banks a race like those, that tread  
 The verdant borders of your Inachus :  
 Hence insolence may dare the rude affront :  
 The stranger friend by the friend's hand has bled.

PEL. Attend him ; he says well ; conduct his steps  
 Safe to the sacred shrines, seats of the gods, 536  
 Within our walls ; and, as you pass, avoid  
 Much talk with those you meet, guiding this  
 stranger,  
 Who claims protection from our hallow'd altars.

## PELASGUS, CHORUS.

CHO. For him thou hast order'd well ; safe may  
 he go  
 Appointed thus : but what becomes of me ? 540  
 What shall I do ? How wilt thou calm my fears ?

PEL. Leave here those boughs, the ensigns of your  
 toils.

CHO. I leave them, as thy voice and hand direct.

PEL. Seest thou that unfenced grove ? Take  
 shelter there. 545

CHO. How should the unconsecrated grove protect  
 me ?

PEL. Let them have wings, we leave you not their  
 prey.

CHO. Than winged dragons they're more dreadful  
 to us.

PEL. With better omens be thy words auspicious.

CHO. No marvel if my mind sinks with its fears.

PEL. But a king's fear is ominous of ill. 551

CHO. Be all thy words, be all thy actions happy !

PEL. Your father will not long be absent from  
 you :

Meanwhile will I persuade the assembled people,  
 If haply I may move them to receive you 555  
 With gen'rous pity : him will I instruct  
 How best to address his speech. Await the event  
 And supplicate the gods, whose guardian power



Is worshipp'd here, to grant your hearts' warm wish.  
 This done, I will return ; and may persuasion 560  
 Attend me, and good fortune speed my steps.

## CHORUS.

## STROPHE I.

Might of the mighty, king of kings,  
 Supremely bless'd amid the bless'd above,  
 Enthroned in glory, righteous Jove,  
 From whom perfection to the perfect springs, 565  
 Hear us, O hear our fond request,  
 To pity melt each gen'rous breast ;  
 View this bold outrage with indignant eye,  
 And shield us from the injury :  
 O'ertake their proud bark on the purple main, 570  
 Sink it with all its sable train ;  
 Our female band with pity view,  
 And think from whose rich blood our honour'd race  
 we drew.

## ANTISTROPHE I.

If Argive Io's blooming grace  
 Could e'er thy fond enamour'd bosom move 575  
 To warm desire and tender love,  
 The pleasing memory of her charms retrace.  
 From her our race divine we boast,  
 Not foreign to this Argive coast.  
 Her foot, in times of old, where now we tread, 580  
 Trod the flower-enamell'd mead ;  
 And made with lowings loud the forests ring,  
 As from the brize's torturing sting  
 O'er many a realm she wandered wide,  
 And dared the bounding waves, that world from world  
 divide. 585

## STROPHE II.

Found her foot rest on Asia's shore,  
 On pastoral Phrygia's, or on Lydia's plains,

585 Alluding to the passage of the Bosphorus, which divides Europe from Asia.

Or Mysian Teuthra's wide domains ?  
 Wildly Cilicia's rugged mountains o'er,  
 Pamphylia's various tribes among, 590  
 Each ceaseless-flowing stream along,  
 Through corn-clad fields, and valleys ever green,  
 The hallow'd haunts of beauty's queen,  
 That winged pest impell'd her foot to rove,  
 To the divine, all fost'ring grove, 595  
 Through whose rich meads, impregn'd with  
 snow,  
 Temper'd with torrid beams Nile's healthful waters  
 flow.

## ANTISTROPHE II.

The race that then possess'd the land,  
 Struck with astonishment and pale affright,  
 Beheld the strange, prodigious sight ; 600  
 Disdaining to be touch'd she trod the strand,  
 The likeness of the lowing race  
 Now soft'ning sweet to virgin grace :  
 They saw, and trembled. All her toils at last,  
 Her wand'rings wild, her tortures pass'd, 605  
 What gentle hand—Eternal Lord 'twas thine ;  
 Thy gentle hand, thy power divine,  
 Soothed, softly soothed her frantic fear,  
 And from her glowing cheek wiped sorrow's modest  
 tear.

## EPODE.

Now thy pleasing force employ, 610  
 All be love, and all be joy.  
 Rising from the sweet embrace,  
 Worthy of his radiant race,  
 Smiles the auspicious boy.  
 Time prepares to stamp his name 615  
 Glorious in the roll of fame ;

596 The most ancient opinion was, that the Nile proceeded from the snow dissolving in the mountains of Upper Ethiopia.

603 The poet here, by taking Io under her change from the heifer to her natural form, has given us the precise image of the Egyptian Isis, who was represented as a most elegant woman with lunar horns on her head.

## L

Earth, through every raptured scene,  
 Hails the ethereal son of Jove,  
 Who could charm heaven's angry queen ?  
 Who her hostile hate remove ? 620  
 This the deed of Jove alone,  
 And this his genuine son.  
 To whom, for justice when I raise the strain,  
 To whom, save Jove, should I complain ?  
 Great, awful author of our ancient line, 625  
 Creative parent, independent lord,  
 Disposer of the world, righteous, benign,  
 Sovereign, above the highest high adored ;  
 Whene'er he deigns to grace some favour'd head,  
 Easy alike to him the will, the word, the deed. 630

## DANAUS, CHORUS.

DAN. Be of good courage, daughters ; a decree,  
 Such as you wish, this gen'rous state has pass'd.  
 CHO. Dear to my soul, with grateful tidings fraught,  
 Hail reverend parent. But inform us how  
 Pass'd the decree ; what numbers favour'd us ? 635  
 DAN. Not one discordant voice jarr'd in their coun-  
 sels.  
 The fire of youth glow'd in these aged veins,  
 When the whole people their uplifted hands  
 Waved in the air, to witness their assent  
 That we might be permitted here to dwell 640  
 Free, unreclaimable, inviolate :  
 That none presume, native or stranger, hence  
 To lead us ; and should force be used, whoe'er  
 Assists not, him the public sentence drives,  
 With infamy, an exile from his country. 645  
 This the Pelasgian king advised, to us  
 Benevolent, declaring the fierce wrath  
 Of Jove, protector of the supplicant,  
 Could not permit this firm and prosp'rous state  
 To flourish ; but such double insult, offer'd 650  
 To ev'ry law of hospitality,  
 Sacred and civil, would with twofold vengeance  
 Draw ruin on it. When the Argives heard

These arguments of winning eloquence,  
 Impatient of the usual forms, they gave 655  
 With hands uplifted their concordant suffrage  
 Friendly to us : thus Jove decreed the event.

CHO. Come then, my sisters, for these pious  
 Argives

Breathe we some pious prayer, whose solemn strain  
 May reach the ear of Jove. And thou, supreme, 660  
 God of the stranger, hear a stranger's voice  
 Sincere, unblamed ; and ratify our vows !

## STROPHE.

Ye progeny of Jove, whose awful power  
 In yon ethereal plain  
 Fixes the glories of your reign, 665  
 Bend from your radiant seats your ear,  
 Attentive to a virgin's prayer,  
 And on this gen'rous race your choicest blessings  
 shower.

Never may war, whose wanton rage  
 'The thund'ring falchion joys to wield, 670  
 Joys, when embattled hosts engage,  
 To mow with ruthless arm the field :  
 Never with rude discordant roar  
 Affright the echoes of this shore ;

Never with hostile hand 675  
 Wave round these glitt'ring towers the blazing brand.  
 Soft-eyed humanity dwells here,  
 That melting to the suppliant's tear  
 Asserts our hopeless cause ;  
 And spotless piety, whose breast 680  
 Submiss reveres Jove's high behest,  
 And hospitable laws.

Your sacred spirit inspires the free  
 To form the gen'rous, bold decree,  
 A man's rude force disdain ; 685  
 To cast on heaven's dread Lord their eye,  
 The terrors of his vengeance fly,  
 Nor scorn our female train :

He o'er the impious roof his thunders rolls,  
 And awful in his wrath appals the guilty souls. 690

## ANTISTROPHE.

Our kindred train, suppliants of holy Jove,  
 Pelasgia's sons revere,  
 And make our wrongs their gen'rous care.  
 For this at ev'ry hallow'd shrine  
 Propitious be each power divine ; 695  
 For this beneath this solemn-shaded grove  
 Our raptured invocations rise,  
 And Heaven shall hear the pious strains.  
 Ah ! never may malignant skies  
 Blast the fresh glories of your plains ; 700  
 Nor pestilence with pois'nous breath,  
 Waste your thin towns with livid death :  
 Nor war's stern power deface  
 The blooming flowers that youth's fair season grace.  
 Still may your chiefs, a reverend band, 705  
 Around the hallow'd altars stand ;  
 And ardent for the state  
 Pour the warm vow to heaven's high Lord,  
 The great, the just ; whose will adored  
 With hoar law tempers fate. 710  
 Still rise new chiefs, a lengthen'd line,  
 (Kind on their birth, Diana, shine !)  
 The brave, the wise, the good ;  
 But never discord's dread alarms  
 Your madd'ning cities rouse to arms, 715  
 And stain your streets with blood :  
 Nor pale disease her sickly dew's display,  
 Touch'd by thy golden beams, ambrosial fount of day

## EPODE.

Fav'ring seasons grace the year,  
 Crown with rich fruits your cultured plains :  
 The joyful flock, the sportive steer, 721  
 Bound wanton o'er your wide domains,  
 Each immortal show'ring treasures,  
 Wake the soft melodious measures ;  
 Let the chastely-warbled lay 725  
 The Muses' rapture-breathing shell obey.

Firm may the honours of your laws remain,  
 And prudence in your counsels reign ;  
 Just to yourselves, and to the stranger kind,  
 May peace to sleep consign the bloodless sword ;  
 Each honour to your country's gods assign'd 731  
 Each laurell'd shrine with hallow'd rites adored ;  
 The parent's hoary head with reverence crown'd ;  
 View this, ye righteous gods and stretch protection  
 round !

DAN. I like this well ; wise are these votive strains.  
 But though your father brings unwelcome tidings, 736  
 New, and unlook'd-for, fear not you the event.  
 From yon high mound, where first you suppliant  
 stood,

I saw a ship, I mark'd its waving streamer,  
 Its swelling sails, and all its gallant trim ; 740  
 Its prow with heedful eye observes its way,  
 Obedient to the helm that guides behind ;  
 Unfriendly sight ! the sailors too I mark'd,  
 Conspicuous in white robes their sable limbs.  
 The attendant vessels, proudly riding, sweep 745  
 The watery way ; she foremost near the land  
 Now furls her sails, and all the shouting crew  
 Bend to the eager oar. Behooves you now  
 Sedate and sage attention, nor neglect  
 These gods. I haste to bring their gen'rous aid, 750  
 The patrons, the protectors of your cause.  
 Haply some herald may be sent, with charge  
 To claim you as their prize : it shall not be :  
 Fear not the event : but should our aid come slow,  
 Forget not the protection of this place. 755  
 Be comforted ; the day, the hour shall come,  
 When he that dares affront the gods shall feel  
 Their chast'ning vengeance bursting on his head.

CHO. How my frame trembles ! Ah, my father,  
 see  
 With winged speed the ships arrive ; between 760  
 No interval of time ; my stiff'ning limbs  
 ÆSCH.—M

Are chain'd with fear, and ev'ry hope of safety,  
If safety lies in flying far, is lost.

DAN. Since this decree is pass'd, fear not, my  
child ;

Argos, I know, will arm in your defence. 765

CHO. Fatally fierce they are, and on their pride  
Destruction waits, and never-sated war,  
These sons of old Ægyptus, not to thee  
Unknown ; ev'n now their firm-compacted ships  
Black o'er the angry deep insulting ride, 770  
Eager to land their sable-tinctured hosts.

DAN. And they shall find a host whose toil-strung  
arms

Relax not in the sun's meridian heat.

CHO. Forsake me not, ah, leave me not alone,  
I pray thee, father : a forsaken woman 775  
Is very weak ; their wily, faithless minds,  
Like obscene crows, spare not the hallow'd altar.

DAN. Now fair befall our cause, if their mad rage,  
Insulting thee, my child, insults the gods.

CHO. Neither these tridents, nor this solemn scene  
Will awe them to refrain their impious hands. 781  
They scorn the gods, and with unhallow'd force  
Rush madly on like savage, rav'ning dogs.

DAN. But dogs, they say, yield to the mast'ring  
wolves ;  
And the soft reed to the firm spiked corn. 785

CHO. They have the force of wild and savage  
beasts ;  
We must escape them, therefore, as we may.

DAN. Slow are the advances of a naval train ;  
Slow the arrangements of the ships ; the care  
To fix the cables, slow ; the experienced chiefs 790  
Trust not too soon the biting anchor's hold,  
If station'd where no harbour winds around ;  
And when the golden sun withdraws his beams,  
The gloom of night brings many an anxious care ;  
Nor dare they, till their vessels ride secure, 795  
Attempt to land. But take thou heed, nor let

Thy fears impel thee to neglect the gods ;  
 But ask their aid. The state will not disdain  
 My age, that tells with youthful warmth its tidings.

## CHORUS.

## STROPHE I.

Ye rising hills, whose reverend heads 800  
 Majestic wave their awe-commanding shades,  
 What woes our shudd'ring souls await ?  
     Or flying on the wings of fear,  
     In some cavern dark and drear  
 Deep shall we plunge, and hide us from our fate ? 805  
     Oh that I could as smoke arise,  
     That rolls its black wreaths through the air ;  
     Mix with the clouds, that o'er the skies  
     Show their light forms, and disappear :  
     Or like the dust be toss'd 810  
 By ev'ry sportive wind, till all be lost !

## ANTISTROPHE I.

Such thoughts in deep despair I roll,  
 The gloom of sorrow black'ning on my soul.  
 Ah father, the vex'd ocean round  
     What horrors struck thy aching sight ? 815  
     Dismay, and pale affright,  
 And wild amazement sink me to the ground.  
     Shall then the base, detested band  
     With rude touch seize us for their own ?  
 No : rather shall this daring hand 820  
     Prepare for death the conscious zone ;  
     Rather in deep disdain  
 My pale shade sink to Pluto's dreary reign.

## STROPHE II.

O might I sit sublime in air, 824  
 Where watery clouds the freezing snows prepare !  
 Or on a rock whose threat'ning brow,  
     The aerial vulture's unreach'd seat,  
     In solitary state  
 Frowns ruinous o'er the affrighted waste below ;



Roll'd headlong down its rugged side, 830  
 A mangled carcass let me lie,  
 Ere dragg'd a pale, unwilling bride.  
 Victim to sad necessity ;  
 And my indignant heart  
 Feel the keen wounds of sorrow's torturing dart. 835

## ANTISTROPHE II.

Throw me, ere that detested day,  
 To prowling dogs and rav'nous birds a prey.  
 No form of death affrights me now :  
 O thou, assign'd the wretch's friend,  
 To bid his miseries end, 840  
 And in oblivion's balm to steep his wo ;  
 Come, gentle death, ere that sad hour  
 Which drags me to the nuptial bed ;  
 And let me find in thy soft power  
 A refuge from the force I dread ; 845  
 O spread thy sable cloud  
 And in its unpierced gloom our sorrows shroud !

## EPODE.

Higher let your voices rise,  
 And swell the choral descant to the skies,  
 Notes of such a lofty vein, 850  
 That gods may listen to the solemn strain !  
 Eternal sire, from heaven's high throne,  
 If thy indignant eyeballs glow  
 With vengeance at foul deeds below,  
 Look down, thou sovereign of the world, look down :  
 Ægyptus' sons, a ruffian race, 855  
 Our flying footsteps chase ;  
 And on our trembling, weeping band  
 Advance to lay their vengeful hand :  
 Extend thy golden scales, 860  
 For without thee what mortal worth avails ?  
 By land, by sea,  
 They seek their prey ;  
 Oh, ere they seize it, may the ruffians die !  
 Again I raise the mournful cry. 865  
 They come, they come, the haughty foes :  
 These are but preludes to my woes :

To yon strong rampires bend your flight ;  
By sea, by land they rush severe,  
And with their stern and threat'ning air, 870  
The softness of our sex affright.  
Look down, thou Sovereign of the world, and save !

## HERALD, CHORUS.

HER. Hence to the ship, hence with your utmost speed.

CHO. No, never, never ; drag me, drag me, stab me, 874  
Rend from these mangled limbs my bleeding head.

HER. Hence to the ship, abandon'd wretches, hence,  
That waits to waft you, with your injured lords,  
O'er the wide billows of yon briny deep.  
Haste, or this spear, with bridal garlands bound,  
Taught a less gentle office, there shall place you 880  
Smarting with many a wound ; there sit and sigh.  
No more, I charge you, of these froward moods,  
Or force shall drive them from you.

CHO. Wo is me !

HER. Haste, quit these seats, haste to the ships, and go  
Inviolatè to the city of the pious. 885

CHO. Ah, never may these eyes again behold  
That rich enlivening stream, which he who drinks  
Feels his fresh blood dance lively in his veins.  
My unpolluted life amid these seats, 889  
These sacred seats, old man, preserve me sacred.

HER. Nay, tell not me ; but to the ship, the ship,  
Averse or not averse, quick shalt thou go ;  
Or vengeance, chast'ning vengeance to thy feet  
Add wings, and up the bark's tall sides pursue thee.

CHO. Ah, wo, wo, wo ! Barbarian, may the winds  
In all their fury hurl thee on the rocks 896  
Of rough Cilicia's brow ; or dash thy corse  
An outcast on the swelling sands beneath !

HER. Cry, shriek, invoke the gods ; yet shalt thou not

Escape the ship of Egypt ; louder shriek, 900  
Cry wo, and wo : if the name please thee, take it.

CHO. Ah wretched me ! Pollution of the land,  
How fierce he yells ! Insolent wretch, away,  
Thy rude touch wounds me ; for this ruffian force,  
Rise, mighty Nile, whelm him beneath thy floods ! 905

HER. Hence, I command you, to the rolling vessel  
Instantly hence ; if one presumes to linger,  
I pay no reverence to your crisped locks,  
This hand perforce shall drag her by her tresses.

CHO. Ah me, immortal sire ! Insolent force 910  
Will hurry me away : it drags me now  
Entangled in its nets ; and all my hopes  
Are vanish'd like a dream, a dusky dream.

Earth, I adjure thee, shield me : shield me, Jove,  
God of this land ; save me in this hard conflict. 915

HER. Gods of this land ! They awe not me ; my  
youth  
They nourish'd not, nor to old age upheld me.

CHO. Near me the serpent rolls his train, and soon  
Will, like a pois'nous viper, dart upon me.

Earth, I adjure thee, shield me ; shield me, Jove,  
God of this land ; save me in this hard conflict. 921

HER. If one of you perversely lingers here,  
Your richly purpled stoles shall find no mercy.

CHO. Ye rulers of the city, force o'erpowers me.

HER. You shall see many rulers, doubt not, soon,  
Ægyptus' sons ; no anarchy is here. 926

CHO. Unlook'd-for ruin comes, O king, upon us.

HER. I must use force, I see, and pluck you hence,  
Dragg'd by the locks, since my words move you not.

PELASGUS, HERALD, CHORUS.

PEL. Whence these outrageous deeds ? How dares  
thy pride 930

Offer this insult to the land where dwell  
Pelasgian men ? Or didst thou deem that women  
Alone inhabit here ? Thy savage acts,

Barbarian, touch the dignity of Greece.

Learn thy mistake, then, and thine high offence. 935

HER. Against what law, what right have I offended?

PEL. First, dost thou know thou art a stranger here?

HER. A stranger here I found what I had lost.

PEL. To whom hast thou address'd thee for protection?

HER. To Mercury, who directs the stranger's search. 940

PEL. The gods! Thou hast no reverence for the gods.

HER. Yes, for the gods of Nile a holy reverence.

PEL. But none for these, if right I understand thee.

HER. These lead I hence; and who shall take them from me?

PEL. Dare but to touch them, dear shalt thou abide it. 945

HER. Is this your hospitality to strangers?

PEL. I owe the ruffian none that robs the gods.

HER. Go then, announce this to Ægyptus' sons.

PEL. It suits not me; my soul disdains the office.

HER. Then let me speak, and plainly; it becomes A herald's office to speak all things plain. 951

How ruffians, say, how robbers of the gods,  
This kindred train, that comes to claim these women?  
Not by the voice of evidence does Mars

Decide these things; nor for a mulct of gold 955

Compound the dreadful quarrel; ere it ends  
Many shall shed their dear blood in the dust,  
Many lie low on earth, and bite the ground.

PEL. Hear then what honour prompts, what justice dictates,

And bear it to the partners of thy voyage. 960

If these approve, if their free will incline them,

Lead them, if gentle words win their assent.

This firm decree the suffrage of the state

Has render'd sacred not by force to yield

A train of females ; this resolve, be sure, 965  
 Is strongly fix'd, and never can be shaken.  
 Though not engraved on tablets, nor enroll'd  
 In seal-stamp'd volumes, my free voice declares it  
 In words of plainest import. Take thy answer ; 969  
 Hence from my sight, with thy best speed begone.

HER. Know then a rising war awaits thy choice ;  
 Valour and conquest crown the helms of men.

PEL. You shall be met by men, whose lively blood  
 Dull draughts of barley wine have never clogg'd.

Now, virgins, with your train of faithful friends,  
 Dismiss your fears ; enter this town, whose walls, 976  
 Strong built, and crown'd with many a bulwark, lift  
 Their tower'd heads impregnable : within  
 The state has many structures ; nor is mine  
 A thin inhabitation : such a house, 980  
 Where cheerful numbers live in wealth and splendour,

May haply please you : if a private mansion,  
 To your own use devote, be more your wish,  
 The best of these, the most approved, is yours ;  
 Make your free choice : I will protect you ; all 985  
 This friendly state, supporting their decree,  
 Will shield you. What, wish you more powerful  
 guardians ?

CHO. For these thy bounties may the bounteous  
 gods

Shower blessings on thy head, thou gen'rous king  
 Of brave Pelasgia ! But, benevolent, 990  
 Send us our father Danaus, on whose firm  
 And provident counsels we rely. His care  
 And sage advice are needful, where to choose  
 Our dwelling, our secure retreat. The tongue  
 Of slander is too prompt with wanton malice 995  
 To wound the stranger : act we then with caution.

PEL. With honour, lovely virgins, with the voice  
 Of fair-applauding fame amidst our city  
 Shall your appointment be, where'er your father  
 Assigns to each her mansion and attendants. 1000

## DANAUS, CHORUS.

DAN. Daughters, it well becomes you to these  
Argives,  
As to the immortal gods, to offer vows,  
Libation, sacrifice, and ev'ry rite  
Religion knows ; so liberal their protection,  
So readily they lent their friendly ears, 1005  
And favour'd all my deeds against these youths,  
These kindred youths, whose headlong pride thus  
haunts you.  
Behold these spears around, to me assign'd  
An honourable guard, that no rude hand  
With barb'rous rage may lift the secret sword, 1010  
And with my blood pollute the pious land.  
This grace, this condescension claims my thanks,  
And you with grateful minds honour it ever.  
To all the wise instructions of your father,  
Graved in your faithful tablets, grave these also, 1015  
That after-times may hold this stranger train  
In reverence. Know then this, the tongue of malice  
Is ever prompt to wound the stranger's fame  
With stings of infamy : I charge you, then,  
Disgrace me not. I see your blooming age, 1020  
Enforcing soft desire ; I know how hard  
To guard the lovely flowers that grace that season.  
Beasts love to riot on their sweets, and man,  
Each insect, and each wanton-winged bird.  
The Queen of Love proclaims their opening bloom ;  
Ah, would she suffer it to remain uncropp'd ! 1026  
And on the delicate tints, that kindling glow  
On beauty's vermeil cheek, each roving youth  
With melting wishes darts the amorous glance.  
We brook not this : else why these various toils,  
These wand'rings o'er the wide-extended main ! 1031  
Let us not work this scandal to ourselves,  
And triumph to our foes. Two mansions here  
Are offer'd to your choice ; Pelasgus one  
Would give, and one the state ; beneath whose roof  
No male attendant waits : the choice is easy. 1036

Only observe these precepts of your father,  
And guard with heedful care your virgin honour.

CHO. O may the powers of heaven in all besides  
Be gracious to us ; in our virgin honour 1040  
Have confidence : be their high wills unchanged.  
I shall not deviate from my mind's fix'd plan.

## CHORUS.

Go, then, ye pure, ye pious train,  
In triumph go to those bless'd powers,  
That o'er this state extend their reign, 1045  
Imperial guardians of these towers ;  
Imperial guardians of these glades,  
Along whose hallow'd shades  
His dark'ning stream old Erasinus rolls :  
With courage arm your souls. 1050  
No more to Nile's deep floods belong  
The warbled voice, the raptured song ;  
Our praise Pelasgia's towns demand ;  
And each fresh fount, that loves to lead  
His humid train through grove, through mead,  
And rolls luxuriance through the land. 1056  
Virgin Diana, bend thine eye,  
And piteous of a virgin's woes,  
O save ensnared chastity,  
From the rude touch of hated foes ; 1060  
Nor see thy struggling vot'ries led  
Where Venus decks the bed !  
Nor, queen of love, shall our mellifluous lays  
Be silent in thy praise :  
For thou, next heaven's imperial queen, 1065  
In highest grace with Jove art seen,  
And mighty deeds declare thy power :  
The passions hear thy soft control ;  
Thy sweet voice melts the willing soul,  
Enchanted with thy honey'd lore. 1070  
Round thee, where'er thou lead'st the way,  
Joyful the frolic Cupids rove ;

And, as their antic sports they play,  
Whisper the harmony of love.

But what have I with love or joy ? 1075

My peace wild fears annoy.

The miseries of flight, pursuit's alarms,

And slaughter-threat'ning arms :

Why else the quick, the fav'ring gales

Waft o'er the waves their flying sails ? 1080

SEMICHORUS.

This is the fix'd decree of fate ;

And thus high heaven's unbounded lord

Pronounced the irrevocable word,

And doom'd us to the nuptial state.

CHORUS.

Ah, never may his sovereign will 1085

Me to Ægyptus' sons unite !

SEMICHORUS.

This is to grasp at shadows still,

And sooth thy soul with vain delight.

CHORUS.

Know'st thou his will ? Or has thine eye

Look'd through futurity ? 1090

SEMICHORUS.

His mind I dare not scan, immense, profound :

And thou thy wishes bound ;

'Gainst heaven's high will exclaim no more,

But in mute meekness learn to adore.

CHORUS.

Almighty Sire, whose healing hand 1095

Soothed thy loved Io's soul to rest,

With comfort cheer this sorrowing breast,

And save us from this hostile band !

For me through fortune's cloud hope beams her ray,

And from that bright'ning part goes bright'ning on ;

So right succeeding right shall force its way, 1101

And the good gods complete what Greece begun.





**THE  
SEVEN CHIEFS AGAINST THEBES.**

**DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.**

**ETEOCLES,**

**SOLDIER,**

**ANTIGONE,**

**ISMENE,**

**HERALD,**

**CHORUS of Theban Virgins.**

## THE SEVEN CHIEFS AGAINST THEBES.

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### ARGUMENT.

**POLYNICES**, the son of **Œdipus** and **Jocasta**, being unjustly deprived of his share of the government by his brother **Eteocles**, repairs to **Argos**, where he marries the daughter of King **Adrastus** ; and, with the assistance of his father-in-law and five other warlike princes, spreads terror and desolation in the Theban territories, and advances to the gates of the capital, where the assailants are repelled, and the two brothers slain in single combat with each other. The Theban senators are no sooner delivered from the apprehensions of a hostile occupation of their city, than they issue a decree that the corpse of **Polynices** shall remain unburied ; his amiable sister **Antigone** openly avows her determination to resist this arbitrary mandate, and prepares to perform the rites of sepulture to her unfortunate brother.

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### **ETEOCLES, CHORUS.**

**ETE.** YE citizens of **Cadmus**, it behooves  
The man that guides the helm of state to speak  
What the sad times require ; nor suffer sleep  
To weigh his eyelids down : for if success  
Attends our toils, to the good gods we bow, 5  
The authors of the blessing : should misfortune,  
Avert it, Heaven ! befall, **Eteocles**  
Shall hear his name alone wide through the city  
Insulted by each tongue, that vents its spleen  
In mutinous reproach, or loud laments : 10  
From which may **Jove**, the guardian of your state,  
Defend the sons of **Cadmus** ! But this hour

1 The builder of Thebes

Calls on you all, whether your flowery spring  
 Yet wants the prime of manhood, or your age  
 Puts forth its firmest strength, to exert your powers,  
 Well it becomes you, to defend the city, 16  
 The altars of the gods presiding here,  
 (Ah, never may their honours be effaced !)  
 Your children, and this land, your common parent,  
 And dearest nurse, who on her fost'ring soil 20  
 Upheld with bounteous care your infant steps,  
 And train'd you to this service, that your hands  
 In her defence might lift the faithful shield.  
 Ev'n to this day indeed the gods incline  
 To favour us: and though so long immured 25  
 Within our rampires, each bold work of war  
 Hath prosper'd in our hands. But now the seer,  
 That listens to the flight of birds, and thence  
 Forms in his prescient mind the sure presage,  
 Guiltless of fire, from their oracular wings 30  
 Draws his deep skill, and warns us that the powers  
 Of Greece combined against us, in the night  
 Advancing, meditate the dark assault.  
 Haste all then to the walls, haste to the bulwarks  
 With all your arms, fill ev'ry tower, secure 35  
 Each pass, stand firm at ev'ry gate, be bold,  
 Nor fear the assailing numbers: heaven is with us.  
 Meanwhile on ev'ry quarter have I sent  
 To observe their forces, and destroy their march:  
 By these, not charged, I trust, in vain to watch, 40  
 Inform'd I guard against the wiles of war.

SOLDIER, ETEOCLES, CHORUS.

SOL. Illustrious king of Thebes, I bring thee tidings  
 Of firm assurance from the foe; these eyes  
 Beheld each circumstance. Seven valiant chiefs  
 Slew on the black-orb'd shield the victim bull, 45  
 And dipping in the gore their furious hands,  
 In solemn oath attest the god of war,  
 Bellona, and the carnage-loving power  
 Of terror, sworn from their firm base to rend

These walls, and lay their ramparts in the dust ; 50  
Or, dying, with their warm blood steep this earth.  
Each in Adrastus' car some dear remembrance  
Piled to their distant parents, while their eyes  
Dropp'd tears, but on their face was no remorse.

Each soul of iron glowing with the rage 55  
Of valour, as the lion when he glares  
Determined battle. What I now relate

Sleeps not, nor lingers ; round the urn I left them,  
By lot deciding to what gate each chief  
Shall lead his forces. These again select 60  
The best, the bravest of the sons of Thebes,  
And instant at the gates assign their stations.

For all in arms the Argive host comes on  
Involved in dust, and from the snorting steeds  
The thick foam falls and dewes the whiten'd fields. 65

Be thine the provident pilot's gen'rous care,  
Guard well the town, ere yet the storm assails it ;  
Ev'n now the waves of war roar o'er the plain ;  
Seize then this fair occasion, instant seize it.  
My faithful eye this day shall hold the watch, 70  
That, well inform'd, no danger may surprise thee.

ETE. O Love, O Earth, O all ye guardian gods ;  
And thou dread curse, the fury of my father,  
Of fatal power, O rend not from its roots  
This ruin'd city, by the insulting foe 75  
Trampled in dust, her sweet Helladian tongue  
Silent, and all her sacred fires extinct !

Ah, never let this land, this town of Cadmus,  
Bend her free neck beneath the servile yoke !  
Protect her, save her ; as you share her honours, 80  
I plead : a flourishing state reveres the gods.

52 It was the custom of the ancients before a battle in which they apprehended danger, to send home to their friends some pledges as remembrances, things of little value in themselves, but rendered dear by the circumstance : these are placed in the chariot of Adrastus, because Amphiaraus had declared that he alone of the confederate chiefs should return to Argos.

## CHORUS.

Wo, wo, intolerable wo !  
 Fierce from their camps the hosts advance,  
 Before their march with thund'ring tread  
 Proud o'er the plain their fiery coursers prance, 85  
 And hither bend their footsteps dread :  
 Yon cloud of dust that chokes the air,  
 A true though tongueless messenger,  
 Marks plain the progress of the foe.  
 And now the horrid clash of arms, 90  
 That, like the torrent, whose impetuous tide  
 Roars down the mountain's craggy side,  
 Shakes the wide fields with fierce alarms,  
 With nearer terrors strikes our souls,  
 And through our chaste recesses rolls. 95  
 Hear, all ye powers of heaven, propitious hear,  
 And check the furies of this threat'ning war !

The crowded walls around  
 Loud clamours rend the sky ;  
 While ranged in deep array the embattled powers  
 Their silver shields lift high 101  
 And level with the ground  
 To lay their rampired heads, assail our towers.  
 What guardian god shall I implore ?  
 Bending at what sacred shrine 105  
 Call from their happy seats what powers divine,  
 And suppliant ev'ry sculptured form adore ?  
 The time demands it : why then, why delay ?—  
 The sound of arms swells on my affrighted ear.—  
 Hold now the pall, the garland, as you pray.— 110  
 Hark ! 'tis the rude clash of no single spear.  
 Stern god of war,  
 Dost thou prepare  
 Thy sacred city to betray ?  
 Look down, look down ; 115  
 O save thine own ;  
 Nor leave us to the foe a prey :  
 If e'er thy soul had pleasure in the brave,  
 God of the golden helm, hear us, and save !

<b>THE SEVEN CHIEFS AGAINST THEBES.</b>	<b>151</b>
And all ye powers, whose guardian care Protects these walls, this favour'd land, O hear these pious suppliant strains ; Propitious aid us, aid a virgin band, And save us from the victor's chains ! For all around with crested pride High waves the helm's terrific tide, Toss'd by the furious breath of war.	120
And thou, great Jove, almighty sire, Confound with foul defeat these Argive powers, Whose arms insult our leaguer'd towers, And fright our souls with hostile fire. The reins that curb their proud steeds round Rattle, and death is in the sound : 'Gainst our seven gates seven chiefs of high com- mand, In arms spear-proof, take their appointed stand.	130
Daughter of Jove, whose soul Glow's at the embattled plain ; And thou, by whom the pawing steed arose, Great monarch of the main, Curb'd by thy strong control ; From our fears free us, free us from our foes ! On thee, stern Mars, again I call : Haste thee, god, and with thee bring The Queen of Love, from whose high race spring ; If Cadmus e'er was dear, defend his wall ! Thou terror of the savage Phœbus, hear, In all thy terrors rush upon the foe ! Chaste Virgin-huntress, goddess ever dear, Wing the keen arrow from thy ready bow ; Hark ! fraught with war The groaning car, Imperial Juno ! shakes the ground ; Fierce as they pass ; The wheels of brass, Dear Virgin-huntress ! roar around ; The gleaming lustre of the brandish'd spear Glares terribly across the troubled air,	135
	140
	145
	150
	155



Alas, my country ! must these eyes,  
 Must these sad eyes behold thy fall !  
 Ah, what a storm of stones, that flies, 160  
 And wing'd with ruin smites the wall !  
 O Phœbus ! at each crowded gate  
 Begins the dreadful work of fate ;  
 Each arm the thund'ring falchion wields,  
 And clashes on the sounding shields. 165  
 O thou, whose kind and matchless might,  
 Bless'd Onca, through the glowing fight  
 Obedient conquest joys to attend,  
 All our seven gates, dread queen, defend !  
 And all ye mighty, guardian powers, 170  
 That here preside, protect our towers :  
 Nor the war-wasted town betray,  
 To fierce and dissonant foes a prey !  
 Ye gods, deliverers of this land,  
 To whom we stretch the suppliant hand, 175  
 Hear us, O hear our virgin prayer,  
 And show that Thebes is yet your care !  
 By every solemn temple, every shrine,  
 Each hallow'd orgie, and each rite divine,  
 Each honour to your power in rev'rence paid, 180  
 Hear us, ye guardian gods, hear us, and aid !

ETEOCLES, CHORUS.

ETE. It is not to be borne, ye wayward race :  
 Is this your best, is this the aid you lend  
 The state, the fortitude with which you steel  
 The souls of the besieged, thus falling down 185  
 Before these images to wail, and shriek  
 With lamentations loud ! Wisdom abhors you.  
 Nor in misfortune, nor in dear success,  
 Be woman my associate : if her power  
 Bears sway, her insolence exceeds all bounds ; 190  
 But if she fears, wo to that house and city,  
 And now, by holding counsel with weak fear,

You magnify the foe, and turn our men  
To flight : thus are we ruin'd by ourselves.  
This ever will arise from suffering women 195  
To intermix with men. But mark me well ;  
Whoe'er henceforth dares disobey my orders,  
Be it or man or woman, old or young,  
Vengeance shall burst upon him, the decree  
Stands irreversible, and he shall die. 200  
War is no female province, but the scene  
For men : hence, home ; nor spread your mischiefs  
here.

Hear you, or not ? Or speak I to the deaf ?

CHO. Dear to thy country, son of Œdipus,  
My soul was seized with terror, when I heard 205  
The rapid car roll on, its whirling wheels  
Grating harsh thunder ; and the iron curb  
Incessant clashing on the barbed steed.

ETE. What ! should the pilot, when the lab'ring  
bark

Scarce rides the swelling surge, forsake the helm,  
And seek his safety from the sculptured prow ? 211

CHO. Yet therefore to these ancient images,  
Confiding in their sacred power, I ran,  
When at the gates sharp sleet of arrowy shower  
Drove hard ; my fears impell'd me to implore 215  
The bless'd gods to protect the city's strength.

ETE. Pray that our towers repel the hostile spear.

CHO. This shall the gods——

ETE. The gods, they say, prepare  
To quit their seats, and leave a vanquish'd town.

CHO. Ah, never, while I breathe the vital air, 220  
May their bless'd train forsake us ; nor these eyes  
Behold destruction raging through our streets,  
And in fierce flames our stately structures blaze !

ETE. Let not these invocations of the gods  
Make you improvident ; remember rather 225  
Obedience is the mother of success,

Wedded to safety : so the wise assure us.

CHO. Yet in the gods is a superior power,

Which often in afflictions clears away  
 The impenetrable cloud, whose sullen gloom 230  
 Sharp misery hung before our darken'd eyes.

ETE. The victim, and the hallow'd sacrifice,  
 When the foes menace, are the task of men;  
 Thine, to be silent, and remain at home.

CHO. That we possess our city yet unconquer'd,  
 That yet our towers repel the assailing foe, 236  
 Is from the gods: from them our voice calls down  
 Further success; why should this move thy anger?

ETE. It does not, virgin: no: your pious vows  
 I blame not. But be silent; lest thy fears, 240  
 Swelling to this excess, dismay our youth.

CHO. Affrighted at the sudden din of war,  
 And trembling with my fears, with hasty foot  
 I sought this citadel, this sacred seat.

ETE. If haply now your eyes behold the dead 245  
 Or wounded, burst not forth in loud laments:  
 For blood and carnage is the food of war.

CHO. Distinct I hear the fiery-neighing steed.

ETE. Whate'er thou hear'st, it asks not thy attention.

CHO. The city shakes beneath the enclosing foes.

ETE. Be satisfied; to guard it is my charge. 251

CHO. I fear: the clash is louder at the gates.

ETE. Peace; nor distract the city with thy cries.

CHO. Ye social powers, leave not our walls defenceless.

ETE. Wo on thee! Canst thou not bear this in silence? 255

CHO. Gods of this state, save me from slavery!

ETE. Me wouldst thou make a slave, and all the state.

CHO. All-powerful Jove, turn on the foe the sword!

ETE. Heavens, of what quality are women form'd?

CHO. Wretched, as men are, in their country's ruin. 260

ETE. Still wail thy country? Still embrace these gods?

CHO. Wild with my fears, I speak I know not what.

ETE. Wouldst thou indulge me in a light request ?

CHO. Speak it at once, quickly shall I obey. 264

ETE. Be silent, wretch, nor terrify thy friends.

CHO. I will ; and with them bear what Fate decrees.

ETE. I praise thy resolution. Clasp no more  
These images ; but stand apart, and ask  
Happier events ; entreat the friendly gods  
To aid us. Hear my vows ; then instant raise 270  
The heaven-appeasing pæan, whose high strains  
Of solemn import, mid her sacred rites,  
Greece pours symphonious ; strains that raise the  
soul

To gen'rous courage, and the fix'd disdain  
Of fear and danger. To the guardian gods 275  
Whose tutelary power protects our fields,  
Protects our crowded streets ; to Dirce's fount ;  
Nor thee, Ismenus, will I pass unhonour'd ;  
If conquest crowns our helms, and saves our city,  
The hallow'd sacrifice shall bleed, and load 280  
Their smoking altars ; this victorious hand  
Shall raise the glitt'ring trophies, and hang high,  
To grace their sacred walls, the rich-wrought vests,  
Spoils of the war, rent from the bleeding foe.  
Breathe to the gods these vows : but let no sigh 285  
Break forth, no lamentation rude and vain :  
Weak is their power to save thee from thy fate.  
My charge shall be at our seven gates to fix  
Six of our bravest youth, myself the seventh,  
In dreadful opposition to the foe ; 290  
Ere yet the violent and tumultuous cry  
Calls me perforce to join the fiery conflict.

CHORUS.

I would obey thee ; but my breast  
Yet pants with fear, and knows not rest :  
Too near my heart-distracting care 295  
Wakes all the horrors of despair :

And as the trembling dove, whose fears  
 Keep watch in her uneasy bower,  
 Thinks in each rustling leaf she hears  
 The serpent gliding to devour, 300  
 I tremble at each sullen sound  
 Of clashing arms, that roars around :  
 With all their troops with all their powers,  
 Fierce they advance to storm our towers ;  
 Now hurtling in the darken'd sky, 305  
 What does my cruel fate prepare ?  
 Rude, batt'ring stones incessant fly,  
 And all the missive storm of war.

Guard, ye great gods, O guard our wall,  
 Nor let the towers of Cadmus fall ! 310  
 Ah, to what fairer, richer plain  
 Your radiant presence will you deign,  
 These fields abandon'd to the foes,  
 Through whose crisp'd shades and smiling  
 meads,  
 Jocundly warbling as she goes, 315  
 Dirce her liquid treasures leads,  
 And boasts that Tethys never gave,  
 Nor all her nymphs, a purer wave !  
 Deign then, ye gods that guard this land,  
 Here deign to take your hallow'd stand : 320  
 Assert your glory : on the foe  
 Pour rout, and havoc, and dismay,  
 Confusion wild, soul-withering wo,  
 And flight, that flings his arms away.  
 Hear then the mournful, solemn strain : 325  
**For** dreadful were its fate, should this strong wall,  
 This ancient, rampired city fall,  
**And** spread its light dust o'er the encumber'd plain,  
 Beneath the proud Achaian spear,  
 Dishonour'd, sunk, the waste of war ; 330  
 Should the fresh virgin's bloom, the matron's age,  
 By the fierce victor's fiery rage,  
**Their** robes all rent, their bleeding bosoms bare,  
 Be dragg'd by their loose-flowing hair,

Like horses, a reluctant prize ; 335  
The desolated streets re-echoing to their cries.

Before my sad presaging soul  
What scenes of imaged horror roll !  
I see the tender virgin's wo,  
Ere yet her ripen'd beauties glow ; 340  
The hateful way I see her tread,

Forcibly torn from her sweet home :  
Happier, far happier are the dead :  
They rest within the silent tomb.

But, the walls humbled to the ground, 345  
What dreadful mis'ries rage around !  
Furious one leads the vengeful bands ;  
One stains with blood his reeking hands ;  
Wide roll, outrageous to destroy,

The dusky smoke, and torrent fires ; 350  
While slaught'ring Mars with hideous joy  
The heaven-contemning rage inspires.

From house to house, from street to street,  
The crashing flames roar round, and meet ;  
Each way the fiery deluge preys, 355  
And girds us with the circling blaze.

The brave, that mid these dire alarms  
For their lost country greatly dare,  
And fired with vengeance rush to arms,  
Fall victims to the blood-stain'd spear. 360

The bleeding babe, with innocent cries,  
Drops from his mother's breast, and dies.  
See rapine rushes, bent on prey ;  
His hasty step brooks no delay.

The spoiler, loaded with his store, 365  
Envious the loaded spoiler views ;  
Disdains another should have more,  
And his insatiate toil renews.

Thick on the earth the rich spoil lies :  
For the rude plunderers' restless-rolling tide, 370  
Their worthless numbers waving wide,

ÆSCH.—O

Drop in their wild haste many a glitt'ring prize.

While, in her chaste apartment bred,  
The trembling virgin captive led,  
Pours, in the anguish of her soul, the tear ; 375  
And, torn from all her heart holds dear,  
The youthful bride, a novice yet in wo,  
Obeys the haughty, happy foe.  
But ere such horrors blast my sight,  
May these sad eyes close in eternal night ! 380

SEMICHÖ. I. See, from his watch the veteran re-  
turns,

Bearing, I ween, fresh tidings from yon host,  
Of highest import : quick his foot, and hasty.

SEMICHÖ. II. This way, behold, the son of Œdipus,  
The king himself advances, pressing on 385  
His hurried step to learn their new-formed measures.

ETEOCLES, SOLDIER, CHORUS.

SOL. Now I can tell thee, for I know it well,  
The disposition of the foe, and how  
Each at our gates takes his allotted post.  
Already near the Prætian gate in arms 390  
Stands Tydeus raging ; for the prophet's voice  
Forbids his foot to pass Ismenus' stream,  
The victims not propitious : at the pass  
Furious, and eager for the fight, the chief,  
Fierce as the dragon, when the mid-day sun 395  
Calls forth his glowing terrors, raves aloud,  
Reviles the sage, as forming tim'rous league  
With war and fate : frowning he speaks, and shakes  
The dark crest streaming o'er his shaded helm  
In triple wave ; while dreadful ring around 400  
The brazen bosses of his shield, impress'd  
With this proud argument. A sable sky  
Burning with stars ; and in the midst full-orb'd  
A silver moon, the eye of night, o'er all  
Awful in beauty pours her peerless light. 405  
Clad in these proud habiliments, he stands

Close to the river's margin, and with shouts  
Demands the war, like an impatient steed,  
That pants upon the foaming curb, and waits  
With fiery expectation the known signal, 410  
Swift as the trumpet's sound to burst away.  
Before the Prætian gate, its bars removed,  
What equal chief wilt thou appoint against him ?

ETC. This military pride, it moves not me :  
The gorgeous blazonry of arms, the crest 415  
High waving o'er the helm, the roaring boss,  
Harmless without the spear, imprint no wound  
The sable night, spangled with golden stars,  
On his proud shield impress'd perchance may prove  
A gloomy presage. Should the shades of night 420  
Fall on his dying eyes, the boastful charge  
May to the bearer be deemed ominous,  
And he the prophet of his own destruction.  
Against his rage the son of Astacus,  
That breathes deliberate valour, at that gate 425  
Will I appoint commander ; bent on deeds  
Of glory, but a votary at the shrine -  
Of modesty, he scorns the arrogant vaunt  
As base, but bids brave actions speak his worth.  
The flower of that bold stem, which from the ground  
Rose arm'd, and fell not in the deathful fight, 431  
Is Menalippus ; him his parent earth  
Claims as her own, and in her natural right  
Calls him to guard her from the hostile spear :  
But the brave deed the die of war decides. 435

## CHORUS.

Go, then, my guardian hero, go ;  
And may each fav'ring god with bright success  
Thy gen'rous valour bless :  
For at thy country's dear command  
Thou arm'st thy righteous hand, 440  
To pour her vengeance on the foe.  
Yet my sad heart must sigh,  
When on the blood-impurpled ground,



Gored with many a gaping wound,

I see my dearest friends expiring lie. 445

SOL. May the gods crown his valiant toil with conquest!

But Capaneus against the Electran gates  
Takes his allotted post, and towering stands  
Vast as the earth-born giants, and inflamed  
To more than mortal daring : horribly 450

He menaces the walls ; (may Heaven avert  
His impious rage !) vaunts that, the gods assenting  
Or not assenting, his strong hand shall rend  
Their rampires down ; that ev'n the rage of Jove  
Descending on the field should not restrain him. 455  
His lightnings, and his thunders wing'd with fire  
He likens to the sun's meridian heat.

On his proud shield portray'd, a naked man  
Waves in his hand a blazing torch ; beneath,  
In golden letters, " I will fire the city." 460

Against this man—but who shall dare to engage  
His might, and dauntless his proud rage sustain ?

ETC. Advantage from advantage here arises.

The arrogant vaunts which man's vain tongue  
throws out

Shall on himself recoil. This haughty chief 465  
Threats high, and, prompt to execute his threats,  
Spurns at the gods ; opes his unhallow'd lips  
In shallow exultations ; hurls on high,  
Weak mortal as he is, 'gainst Jove himself,  
Hurls his extravagant and wild defiance. 470

On him, I trust, the thunder wing'd with fire,  
Far other than the sun's meridian heat,  
Shall roll its vengeance. But against his pride,  
Insolent vaunter, shall the glowing spirit,  
That burns for glory in the daring breast 475  
Of Polyphontes, be opposed : his arm,  
Strong in Diana's tutelary aid,  
Shall be a sure defence. But to thy tale :  
Who next before our gates assumes his station ?

CHORUS.

Yes, let him perish, the proud foe, 480  
That storms, in savage hope, the vanquish'd town,  
And rends its rampires down.

Him first may heaven's almighty sire,  
Rolling his vengeful fire,  
Dash in the flaming ruin low ; 485

Ere his impetuous spear  
Bursts ev'ry bar of my retreat,  
And from my virgin seat  
Drags me, perforce, from all my soul holds dear.

SOZ. Third from the brazen helm leap'd forth the  
lot 490

Of fierce Eteoclus, who takes his post  
Against the gates of Neis : there he whirls  
His fiery neighing steeds, that toss their heads  
Proud of their nodding plumes, eager to rush  
Against the gates ; and snorting, champ their curbs,  
Boss'd with barbaric pride. No mean device \ 496

Is sculptured on his shield :—a man in arms,  
His ladder fix'd against the enemy's walls,  
Mounts, resolute to rend their rampires down ;

And cries aloud, the letters plainly mark'd,— 500

“ Not Mars himself shall beat me from the towers.”

Appoint, of equal hardihood, some chief

To guard the city from the servile yoke.

ETE. Such shall I send, to conquest send him ;  
one

That bears not in his hand this pageantry 505

Of martial pride. The hardy Megareus,

From Creon sprung, and that bold race which rose

Embattled from the earth : him from the gates

The furious neighings of the fiery steeds

Affright not ; but his blood spilt on the earth 510

Amplly requites the nourishment she gave him ;

Or captive both, the man in arms, the town

Storm'd on the sculptur'd shield, and the proud  
bearer,

Shall with their spoils adorn his father's house.

N

## CHORUS.

Go, then, and glory be thy guide ! 515  
 For thee, brave youth, we pour this ardent prayer ;  
 And favouring heaven shall hear.

Go, then, my house's guardian, go ;  
 And, rushing on the foe,  
 Bravely repel their vaunting pride. 520  
 And as each furious soul

Hurls the ferocious menace high,  
 May he that rules the sky  
 In vengeance his indignant eyeballs roll !

SOL. At the next gate, named from the martial  
 goddess 525

Onca Minerva, stands Hippomedon.  
 I heard his thund'ring voice, I saw his form  
 In bulk and stature proudly eminent ;  
 I saw him roll his shield, large, massy, round,  
 Of broad circumference : it struck my soul 530  
 With terror. On its orb no vulgar artist

Express'd this image :—a Typhoeus huge,  
 Disgorging from his foul enfoulder'd jaws,  
 In fierce effusion, wreaths of dusky smoke,  
 Signal of kindling flames : its bending verge 535  
 With folds of twisted serpents border'd round.

With shouts the giant chief provokes the war ;  
 And in the ravings of outrageous valour  
 Glares terror from his eyes. Behooves thee, then,  
 Strong opposition to his fiery rage, 540  
 Which at the gates ev'n now spreads wild dismay.

ETE. First, Onca Pallas, holding near the gates  
 Her hallow'd state, abhors his furious rage,  
 And in her guardian care shall crush the pride  
 Of this fell dragon. Then the son of Ænops, 545  
 Hyperbius, of approved and steady valour,  
 Shall man to man oppose him ; one that dares  
 Assay his fate in the rough shock of battle ;  
 In form, in spirit, and in martial arms  
 Consummate ; such high grace Hermes conferr'd.  
 In hostile arms thus man shall combat man, 551

And to the battle on their sculptured shields  
 Bring adverse gods : the fierce Typhoeus he,  
 Breathing forth flakes of fire ; Hyperbius bears  
 The majesty of Jove securely throned, 565  
 Grasping his flaming bolt : and who e'er saw  
 The Thund'rer vanquish'd ? In the fellowship  
 Of friendly gods, the conquerors are with us,  
 They with the conquer'd ; and with like event  
 These warriors shall engage : as Jove in fight 560  
 Subdued the fell Typhoeus, so his form  
 Emblazoned on the shield shall guard Hyperbius.

CHORUS.

If aught of truth my soul inspires,  
 This chief, that towering o'er the affrighted field  
 Bears on his sculptur'd shield 565  
 The enormous monster, buried deep  
 Beneath a mountainous heap,  
 Rolling in vain his turbid fires ;  
 Monster accursed, abhorr'd  
 By gods above, by men below ; 570  
 This chief his head shall bow

Low at the gate beneath the victor's sword

SOL. Prophetic be thy hopes ! At the north  
 gate,

Yet hear me, king, the fifth bold warrior takes  
 His station near the tomb where, honour'd, lies 575  
 Jove-born Amphion : by his spear he swears,  
 Which, as he grasps, he dares to venerate  
 More than a god, and dearer to his eyes  
 Than the sweet light of heaven ;—by this he swears,  
 To level with the ground the walls of Thebes, 580  
 Though Jove himself oppose him. Thus exclaims  
 This beauteous branch, sprung from a mountain  
 nymph,

Blooming in manly youth ; the tender down  
 Of unripe age scarce sprouting on his cheek ;  
 But ruthless are his thoughts, cruel his eye, 585  
 And proudly vaunting at the gate he takes  
 His terrible stand. Upon his clashing shield,

Whose orb sustains the storm of war, he bears  
 The foul disgrace of Thebes, a rav'nous sphynx,  
 Fix'd to the plates : the burnish'd monster round 590  
 Pours a portentous gleam ; beneath her lies  
 A Theban, mangled by her cruel fangs,  
 'Gainst this let each brave arm direct the spear.  
 No hireling he, to prostitute for gold  
 The war, or shame the length of way he trod, 595  
 Ev'n from Arcadia : such this stranger comes  
 Parthenopæus, and repays to Argos  
 Its hospitable honours, 'gainst these towers  
 Breathing proud menaces. The gods avert them !

ETR. That ruin, which their fierce aspiring  
 thoughts 600

With impious vaunts intend, may the just gods  
 Turn on themselves, total defeat, and shame :  
 So let them perish ! To this proud Arcadian  
 No boaster we oppose ; but one whose hand  
 Knows its rough work, Actor, the valiant brother  
 Of him last named. Never will he permit 606  
 The tongue, without the assay of warlike deeds,  
 To rush within the gates, and execute  
 Its ruinous threats ; nor him, whose hostile shield  
 Bears sculptured that abhorr'd and rav'ning beast :  
 And many a thund'ring stroke with stern rebuke 611  
 Shall check her proud advances to the walls.  
 Soon shall the fav'ring gods confirm these hopes.

## CHORUS.

These words appal my throbbing breast ;  
 And the light tangles of my braided hair 615  
 Rise upright with my fear,  
 As from the impious foes around  
 These dreadful voices sound,  
 Furious with thund'ring threats express'd.  
 Ye powers, that rule on high, 620  
 Scatter their dreadful forces wide,  
 Or let their crested pride  
 Low in the dust beneath our rampires lie !

SOL. The sixth brave chief, that with the golden  
curb

Of prudence knows to check his gen'rous valour,  
The fate-fortelling seer, Amphiaraus, 626

At the Omolæan gate his destined post  
Assumes in arms, and on the fiery Tydeus  
Throws many a keen reproach, reviles him as  
A homicide, the troubler of the state, 630

The mighty author of all ill to Argos,  
With murder and the furies at his heels  
Urging Adrastus to these hateful deeds.  
Thy brother Polynices, with him leagued  
In these despiteful deeds, he blames aloud, 635

Descants upon his name, and thus rebukes him:  
"How grateful to the gods must this deed be,  
Glorious to hear, and in the roll of fame  
Shining to distant ages, thus to lead  
These foreign arms to waste thy bleeding coun-  
try, 640

To raze those princely mansions, where thy fathers,  
Heroes, and demigods, once held their seats!  
But say thy cause be just, will justice dry  
Thy mother's tears! And when the furious spear,  
Hurl'd by thy hand, shall pierce thy country's  
bosom, 645

Will she with friendly arms again receive thee?  
Prescient of fate I shall enrich this soil;  
Sunk in the hostile plain. But let us fight.  
One thing at least is mine: I will not find  
A vulgar or dishonourable death." 650

So spoke the prophet; and with awful port  
Advanced his massy shield, the shining orb  
Bearing no impress: for his gen'rous soul  
Wishes to be, not to appear, the best;  
And from the culture of his modest worth 655  
Bears the rich fruit of great and glorious deeds.  
Him let the virtuous and the wise oppose;  
For dreadful is the foe that fears the gods.

ETE. I mourn the destiny, that blends the just  
 With these unhallow'd wretches. Nothing worse,  
 In whate'er cause, than impious fellowship ; 661  
 Nothing of good is reap'd ; for when the field  
 Is sown with wrong, the ripen'd fruit is death.  
 If with a desperate band, whose hearts are hot  
 With villany, the pious hoists his sails, 665  
 The vengeance of the gods bursts on the bark  
 And sinks him with the heaven-detested crew.  
 If midst a race inhospitably bent  
 On savage deeds, regardless of the gods,  
 The just man fix his seat, the impending wrath 670  
 Spares not, but strikes him with vindictive fury,  
 Crush'd in the general ruin. So this seer,  
 Of temper'd wisdom, of unsullied honour,  
 Just, good, and pious, and a mighty prophet,  
 In despite to his better judgment join'd 675  
 With men of impious daring, bent to tread  
 The long, irremeable way with them .  
 Shall, if high Jove assist us, be dragg'd down  
 To joint perdition. Ne'er shall he advance  
 Against our gates, withheld not by base fear, 680  
 Or cowardice of soul ; but that he knows  
 His fate (if Phœbus aught of truth foretells),  
 To fall in fight : he loves then to be silent,  
 Since what the time demands he cannot speak.  
 Yet him against the strength of Lasthenes, 685  
 Who from the stranger's inroad guards our gates,  
 Shall I oppose : in manhood's vig'rous prime  
 He bears the providence of age ; his eye  
 Quick as the lightning's glance ; before his shield  
 Flames his protended spear, and longs to obey 690  
 His hand. But victory is the gift of Heaven.

## CHORUS.

That gift, ye great immortal powers,  
 On the brave guardians of our state bestow ;  
 On each victorious brow  
 The radiant honour bind ! O hear 695  
 A virgin's pious prayer ;

Chase the proud strangers from our towers ;  
 Or headlong let them fall  
 (Thy red right hand, almighty sire,  
 Rolling its vengeful fire), 700  
 In flaming ruin stretch'd beneath our wall !  
 SOL. The seventh bold chief—Forgive me that I  
 name

Thy brother, and relate the horrible vows,  
 The imprecations, which his rage pours forth  
 Against the city ;—on fire to mount the walls, 705  
 And from their turrets to this land proclaim,  
 Rending its echoes with the song of war,  
 Captivity : to meet thee sword to sword,  
 Kill thee, then die upon thee : if thou livest,  
 To avenge on thee his exile and disgrace 710  
 With the like treatment : thund'ring vengeance thus  
 The rage of Polynices calls the gods,  
 Presiding o'er his country, to look down,  
 And aid his vows. His well-orb'd shield he holds,  
 New-wrought, and with a double impress charged :  
 A warrior, blazing all in golden arms, 715  
 A female form of modest aspect leads,  
 Expressing justice, as the inscription speaks,  
 " Yet once more to his country, and once more  
 To his paternal throne I will restore him." 720  
 Such their devices. But the important task,  
 Whom to oppose against his force, is thine.  
 Let not my words offend : I but relate,  
 Do thou command ; for thou art sovereign here.

ETC. How dreadful is the hatred of the gods ! 725  
 Unhappy sons of Œdipus, your fate  
 Claims many a tear. Ah me ! my father's curse  
 Now stamps its vengeance deep. But to lament,  
 Or sigh, or shed the tear, becomes me not,  
 Lest more intolerable grief arise. 730  
 Be Polynices told, ill-omen'd name,  
 Soon shall we see how far his blazon'd shield

731 The name Polynices signifies "much contention."



Avails ; how far inscriptions wrought in gold,  
 With all their futile vauntings, will restore him.  
 If Justice, virgin daughter of high Jove, 735  
 Had ever form'd his mind, or ruled his actions,  
 This might have been : but neither when his eyes  
 First saw the light of life ; nor in the growth  
 Of infancy ; nor in the advancing years  
 Of youth ; nor in the riper age, that clothes 740  
 With gradual down the manly cheek, did Justice  
 E'er deign to instruct, or mark him for her own.  
 Nor now, I ween, in this his fell intent  
 To crush his country, will her presence aid him :  
 For Justice were not justice, should she favour  
 The injurious outrage of his daring spirit. 746  
 In this confiding I will meet his arms  
 In armed opposition : who more fit ?  
 Chief shall engage with chief, with brother brother,  
 And foe with foe. Haste, arm me for the fight ;  
 Bring forth my greaves, my hauberk, my strong  
 spear. 751

CHO. Dear to thy country, son of Ædipus,  
 Be not thy rage like his, whom we abhor.  
 Thebes has no dearth of valiant sons to oppose  
 These Argives ; and their blood may be atoned : 755  
 The death of brothers by each other slain ;—  
 That stain no expiation can atone.

ETE. Could man endure defeat without dishonour,  
 'Twere well ; but to the dead nothing remains,  
 Save glory : to the dastard, and the base 760  
 Fame never pays that honourable meed.

CHO. Ah, whither dost thou rush ! Let not re-  
 venge,  
 That wildly raving shakes the furious spear,  
 Transport thee thus. Check this hot tide of pas-  
 sion.

ETE. No : since the god impels me, I will on : 765  
 And let the race of Laius, let them all,  
 Abhorr'd by Phœbus, in this storm of fate,  
 Sink down to deep Cocytus' dreary flood.

CHO. Cruel and murd'rous is the rage that fires thee

To deeds of death, to unpermitted blood ; 770  
And sorrow is the bitter fruit it yields.

ETE. My father's curse, a stern relentless fury,  
Rolling her tearless eyes, looks on and tells me  
Glory pursues her prize, disdaining fate.

CHO. Ah, rave not thus : Fame will not call thee  
base 775

Or cowardly, if well thy life be order'd.  
The gloomy fury enters not his house  
Whose hands present the accepted sacrifice.

ETE. The gods accept not us ; and on our fall  
Glory attends admiring : why then sue 780  
For grace, with servile fear cringing to death !

CHO. For that it is at hand : its terrible power  
Soothed by the abatement of this fiery valour,  
May come perchance more gentle ; now it rages.

ETE. My father's imprecations rage, and haunt  
My sleep : too true the real visions rise, 786  
And wave the bloody sword that parts his kingdoms.

CHO. Let us persuade thee, though thou scorn'st  
our sex.

ETE. What would thy wish have done ? Speak  
it in brief.

CHO. Ah, go not this way : go not to this gate. 790

ETE. My soul's on fire ; nor shall thy words  
retard me.

CHO. Conquest, that spurns at right, offends the  
gods.

ETE. Ill suit these tame words the arm'd war-  
rior's ear.

CHO. And canst thou wish to spill thy brother's  
blood ?

ETE. By the just gods he shall not 'scape my  
vengeance. 795

CHORUS.

She comes, the fierce tremendous power,  
And harrows up my soul with dread.

O

No gentle goddess, prompt to shower  
 Her blessings on some favour'd head.  
 I know her now, the prophetess of ill, 800  
 And vengeance ratifies each word,  
 The votive fury, fiend abhorr'd;  
 The father's curses to fulfil  
 Dreadful she comes, and with her brings  
 The brood of fate, that laps the blood of kings 805  
 The rude barbarian, from the mines  
 Of Scythia, o'er the lots presides;  
 Ruthless to each his share assigns,  
 And the contested realm divides:  
 To each allots no wider a domain 810  
 Than, on the cold earth as they lie,  
 Their breathless bodies occupy,  
 Regardless of an ampler reign.  
 Such narrow compass does the sword,  
 A cruel umpire, their high claims afford. 815  
 Conflicting thus in furious mood,  
 Should each by other's hand be slain;  
 Should the black fountain of their blood  
 Spout forth, and drench the thirsty plain;  
 Who shall the solemn expiation pay? 820  
 Who with pure lavers cleanse the dead?  
 Miseries to miseries thus succeed,  
 And vengeance marks this house her prey,  
 Swift to chastise the first ill deed;  
 And the sons' sons in her deep fury bleed 825  
 The first ill deed from Laius sprung:  
 Thrice from his shrine these words of fate  
 Awful the Pythian Phœbus sung:—  
 "Die childless, wouldst thou save the state."  
 Urged by his friends, as round the free wine flows,  
 To Love's forbidden rites he flies: 831  
 By the son's hand the father dies.  
 He in the chaste ground, whence he arose,  
 Was bold to implant the deadly root;  
 And madness rear'd each baleful-spreading shoot.

Wide o'er misfortune's surging tide 836  
 Billows succeeding billows spread,  
 Should one, its fury spent, subside,  
 Another lifts its boist'rous head,  
 And foams around the city's shatter'd prow. 840  
 But should the rough tempestuous wave  
 Force through our walls too slight to save,  
 And lay the thin partition low,  
 Will not the flood's resistless sway 844  
 Sweep kings and people, town and realms away?  
 The dreadful curse pronounced of old  
 To vengeance rouses ruthless hate;  
 And slaughter, ranging uncontroll'd  
 Pursues the hideous work of fate.  
 Wreck'd in the storm the great, the brave, the wise  
 Are sunk beneath the roaring tide. 851  
 Such was the chief, this city's pride,  
 Dear to each god in yon bright skies,  
 Whose prudence took our dread away,  
 The ravening monster gorged with human prey. 855  
 Where now the chief? His glories where?  
 Fall'n, fall'n. From the polluted bed  
 Indignant madness, wild despair,  
 And agonizing grief succeed.  
 The light of heaven, himself, his sons abhorr'd, 860  
 Darkling he feeds his gloomy rage,  
 Bids them, with many a curse, engage,  
 And part their empire with the sword.  
 That curse now holds its unmoved state,  
 The furious fiend charged with the work of fate. 865

SOLDIER, CHORUS.

SOL. Have comfort, virgins, your fond parents'  
 joy;  
 The city hath escaped the servile yoke,  
 And the proud vaunts of these impetuous men  
 Are fall'n: the storm is ceased, and the rough  
 waves,  
 That threaten'd to o'erwhelm us, are subsided, 870

Our towers stand firm, each well-appointed chief  
 Guards his charge with manly fortitude.  
 All at six gates is well : but at the seventh  
 The god, to whom that mystic number's sacred,  
 Royal Apollo, took his awful stand, 875  
 Repaying on the race of Œdipus  
 The ill-advised transgression of old Laius.

CHO. What new affliction hath befall'n the city ?

SOL. The city is preserved : the brother kings  
 Are fall'n, each slaughter'd by the other's hand. 880

CHO. Who ? What ? Thy words distract my  
 sense with fear.

SOL. Be calm, and hear. The sons of Œdipus.

CHO. Ah me ! I am the prophetess of ill.

SOL. It is indeed too certain : both are dead.

CHO. Came they to this ? 'Tis horrible ; yet tell  
 me. 885

SOL. Brother by brother's hand dreadfully slain.

CHO. And has one common fate involved them  
 both ?

SOL. It has indeed destroy'd the unhappy race.  
 Here then is cause for lamentation, cause  
 For joy : joy, that the city stands secure ; 890  
 But lamentation that the chiefs are fall'n.  
 To both the rigid steel, forged in the mines  
 Of Scythia, shares their whole inheritance ;  
 And each receives but that small tract of earth  
 Which serves him for a tomb ; their father's curse,  
 Fatally cruel, sweeps them both away.  
 The city is preserved ; but the dust drinks  
 The blood of the brothers, each by the other slain.

CHORUS.

MONODE.

O Jove supreme,  
 And all ye gods that guard this state, 900  
 Should I the joyful pæan raise,  
 And celebrate your praise ?  
 Your guardian care, propitious powers,

Preserved our walls, preserved our towers !  
 Or bid the solemn, doleful strain 905  
 Lament the chiefs, the brothers slain ;  
     A mournful theme ;  
 Through mad ambition's impious pride  
 Childless, unblest'd, in youth's warm tide  
 Fall'n, fall'n by too severe a fate ? 910

STROPHE.

Thou gloomy curse, too prompt to ill,  
 A father's vengeance to fulfil,  
 I feel, I feel thee in my shiv'ring breast !  
 Soon as I heard the unhappy slain  
 Lay weltring on the ensanguined plain, 915  
 With inspiration's raging power possess'd,  
 I form'd the funeral strains to flow  
 With all the melody of wo.

ANTISTROPHE.

Thou fell, ill-omen'd, cruel spear,  
 Couldst thou the father's curses hear, 920  
 And wing'd with fury drink the brother's gore ?  
 Now, Laius, boast the frantic deed :  
 Thy disobedience hath its meed ;  
 The fatal oracle delays no more.  
 These are your works ; and round them stand  
 Horrors, and death's avenging band. 926

EPODE.

Is this a tale of fear-created wo ?  
 In very deed before our eyes  
 A twofold scene of misery lies,  
 And from a double slaughter double horrors flow ;  
 While grief on grief, and groan on groan 931  
 Rush in, and make this house their own.  
 Come then, ye virgins, from the mournful bands,  
 To wail the mighty slain ;  
 And ever and anon, at each sad pause 935  
 The dying cadence draws,

928 The dead bodies of Eteocles and Polynices are here brought on the stage.

Together smite your high-raised hands,  
 The sullen sound attemper'd to the strain,  
 That with many a dismal note  
 Accompanies the sable boat, 940  
 Slow as it sails on Acheron's dull stream,  
 Wafting its joyless numbers o'er  
 To that unlovely, dreary shore.  
 Which Phœbus never views, nor the light's golden  
 beam.

SEMICHOR. I. But see, to aid this mournful office  
 come 945

Antigone and Ismene : they, be sure,  
 Will, from their lovely gentleness of soul,  
 Pour for their brothers' loss their sorrows wild.  
 Behooves us then, ere the sad tale shall reach  
 Their ear, with meet solemnity to raise 950  
 The thrilling strain, and chant the hymn of death.

SEMICHOR. II. Unhappy in your brothers, most un-  
 happy  
 Of all, that o'er their swelling bosoms bind  
 The decent vest, I weep, I breathe the sigh  
 Warm from my heart, that feels for your afflictions.

ANTIGONE, ISMENE, CHORUS.

SEMICHORUS I.

Ah, what frantic rage possessed 956  
 Each unyielding, ruthless breast,  
 Wisdom scorn'd and friends defied,  
 By threat'ning ills unterrified,  
 'Gainst their father's house to bear 960  
 Wretched they, the fatal spear !

SEMICHORUS II.

Wretched they a wretched death  
 Found their house's fall beneath.

SEMICHORUS I.

Each the ruin'd palace o'er  
 Strove to extend his envied power : 965  
 Each unrivall'd and alone  
 Proudly strove to seize the throne

But the sword their contest ends,  
Not the lovely strife of friends.  
Hate that never knows remorse, 970  
Fury of the father's curse,  
Through their sides with horrid sway  
Urged the sharp steel's purple way.

SEMICHORUS II.

Charged with death thou cruel curse,  
Each hath felt thy fatal force. 975

SEMICHORUS I.

Brother pierced by brother dies,  
Low their house in ruin lies.

SEMICHORUS II.

From their father's furious breath  
Discord rose, and rage, and death.

SEMICHORUS I.

Grief with wild, distracted air, 980  
Through the city leads despair ;  
The towers on high, the vales below,  
Sigh the sullen notes of wo.

To other lords the large domains,  
And the envied power remains ; 985  
Of the territories wide,

For which they fought for which they died,  
Each receives an equal share,  
Fiercely parted by the spear :  
Cruel arbiter of fate, 990  
Friends thy rude decisions hate.

SEMICHORUS II.

Pierced with steel, each finds his end :  
Pierced with steel, they haste to attend  
Their fathers, by like bloody death,  
In the yawning grave beneath. 995

SEMICHORUS I.

Grief, that rends the tortured breast,  
Deep with real woes possess'd,  
Tears fast streaming from her eyes  
From the haunts of pleasure flies,



Anguish, misery all her own, 1000  
 Sadly pours the hollow groan ;  
 While the ruin'd palace round  
 Echo answers to the sound ;  
 And, each frightful pause between,  
 From her airy shell unseen, 1005  
 Listens to the funeral strain,  
 Wailing the unhappy slain ;  
 Wailing all the dreadful woes  
 That from maddening discord rose ,  
 Many a friend among the dead, 1010  
 While the hostile legions bleed.

## SEMICHORUS II.

Far beyond each sorrowing dame,  
 Each that bears a mother's name,  
 Each that groans upon the earth,  
 Hapless she that gave them birth. 1015  
 She, to share her bed and throne,  
 As a husband took her son :  
 These she bore, and this their fate,  
 Brother slain by brother's hate.

## ISMENE.

Brothers they, by birth allied, 1020  
 Spread the mutual carnage wide :  
 Unfriendly each to other's life,  
 In the madding rage of strife.  
 But their hatred is no more ;  
 On the earth, all stain'd with gore, 1025  
 Their stream of life unites, and shows  
 From one common source it rose.

## CHORUS.

Umpire of the strife of kings,  
 Forth the barbarous stranger springs :  
 Ruthless issuing from the flame 1030  
 O'er the seas the keen steel came :  
 Ruthless came the realm to share,  
 Big with mischief, wasting war :  
 And accursed, without remorse,  
 Executes a father's curse 1035

ANTIGONE.

They have the wretched share they chose,  
Share of heaven-appointed woes :  
And the rich, contested prize  
Deep beneath earth's bosom lies.

ISMENE.

It falls, the royal house, it falls ; 1040  
Ruin lords it o'er its walls ;  
And the Furies howl around,  
Notes of shrill, soul-piercing sound.  
Slaughter, reeking yet with gore,  
Raises high each gate before, 1045  
Where they fought, and where they bled,  
Trophies of the mighty dead ;  
And, the rival chiefs subdued,  
Ceases from her work of blood.

ANTIGONE.

Wounded thou gavest the fatal wound. 1050

ISMENE.

Dying thy hand its vengeance found.

ANTIGONE.

By the spear 'twas thine to kill.

ISMENE.

And the spear's thy blood to spill.

ANTIGONE.

Fierce thy thought, and fell thy deed.

ISMENE.

Fierce recoil'd it on thy head. 1055

ANTIGONE.

Flow my tears.

ISMENE.

My sorrows flow.

ANTIGONE.

He that slew, shall lie as low.  
Madness mingles with my moans.

ISMENE.

Heaves my heart and bursts with groans.

ANTIGONE.

Thou shalt claim the ceaseless tear. 1060

ISMENE.

To my soul wast thou most dear.

ANTIGONE.

Thee thy friend stretch'd on the plain.

ISMENE.

And by thee thy friend is slain.

ANTIGONE.

Twice to see.

ISMENE.

And twice to tell.

ANTIGONE.

Near us do these sorrows dwell.

1065

ISMENE.

Near us dwell these sorrows, near  
As to sisters brothers are.

ANTIGONE.

Fate in all thy terrors clad,  
Œdipus, thy awful shade,  
Erinnys, frowning black as night,  
Dreadful, dreadful is your might!

1070

ISMENE.

Fierce from flight achieved he deeds  
At which my heart with anguish bleeds.

ANTIGONE.

Nor is he return'd that slew.

ISMENE.

Safe himself, on death he flew.

1075

ANTIGONE.

Death upon himself he brought.

ISMENE.

And to him destruction wrought.

ANTIGONE.

Sprung from an unhappy line—

ISMENE.

In one unhappy fate they join.

ANTIGONE.

Mournful, threefold misery!

1080

ISMENE.

Sad to tell.

ANTIGONE.

And sad to see.

Fate, in all thy terrors clad,  
 Œdipus, thy awful shade.  
 Erinnyes, frowning black as night,  
 Dreadful, dreadful is your might! 1085  
 Thou their power hast pass'd, hast known.

ISMENE.

Soon this knowledge was thy own.

ANTIGONE.

To the town advancing near.

ISMENE.

Lifting high thy purple spear,  
 Burning fierce with enmity. 1090

ANTIGONE.

Sad to tell.

ISMENE.

And sad to see.

ANTIGONE.

Ah, what woes on us await!

ISMENE.

And our house oppress'd with fate:  
 Through the land the evils spread,  
 Falling heaviest on my head. 1095

ANTIGONE.

I the afflicting burden share,  
 Equal sorrow, equal care.

ISMENE.

Eteocles, from thee it flows,  
 Author of these mournful woes,

ANTIGONE.

Each the gushing tear demands. 1100

ISMENE.

Each with phrensy arm'd his hands.

ANTIGONE.

Where shall we with pious care  
 The sepulchral earth prepare?

ISMENE.

Where the hallow'd ground shall spread  
 Awful honours o'er the dead? 1105

## ANTIGONE.

Their unhappy father nigh  
Let the mournful ruins lie.

## ANTIGONE, ISMENE, CHORUS, HERALD.

HER. My office leads me to proclaim the mandate  
Of the great rulers of the Theban state.

Eteocles, for that he loved his country, 1110

They have decreed with honour to inter.

To shield her from her foes, he fought, he fell ;

Her sacred rites revered, unstained with blame ;

Where glory calls the valiant youth to bleed,

He bled. Thus far of him am I bid say. 1115

Of Polynices, that his corpse shall lie

Cast out unburied, to the dogs a prey ;

Because his spear, had not the gods opposed,

Threaten'd destruction to the lands of Thebes.

In death the vengeance of his country's gods 1120

Pursues him, for he scorn'd them, and presumed

To lead a foreign host, and storm the town.

Be this then his reward, to lie exposed

To rav'nous birds, unhonour'd, of the rites

That grace the dead, libations at the tomb, 1125

The solemn strain, that midst the exequies

Breathes from the friendly voice of wo, deprived.

These are the mandates of the Theban rulers.

ANT. And to these Theban rulers I declare,

If none besides dare bury him, myself 1130

Will do that office, heedless of the danger,

And think no shame to disobey the state,

Paying the last sad duties to a brother.

Nature has tender ties, and strongly joins

The offspring of the same unhappy mother, 1135

And the same wretched father. In this task

Shrink not, my soul, to share the ills he suffer'd,

Involuntary ills ; and while life warms

This breast, be bold to show a sister's love

To a dead brother. Shall the famished wolves 1140

Fatten on him ? Away with such a thought !

I, though a woman, will prepare his tomb,  
Dig up the earth, and bear it in this bosom,  
In these fine folds to cover him. Go to.  
I will not be opposed. Fruitful invention 1145  
Shall devise means to execute the task.

HER. I charge thee not to offend the state in this.

ANT. I charge thee waste not words on me in vain.

HER. Rage soon inflames a people freed from danger.

ANT. Inflame them thou, he shall not lie unburied. 1150

HER. Wilt thou thus grace the object of their hate?

ANT. Long have they strove to load him with dishonour.

HER. Not till he shook this land with hostile arms.

ANT. Great were his wrongs, and greatly he revenged them. 1154

HER. Injured by one, his vengeance burst on all.

ANT. Discord, the meanest of the gods, will do  
What she resolves; spare then thy tedious speech,  
And be assured that I will bury him.

HER. Self-will'd and unadvised! I must declare this.

ANTIGONE, ISMENE, CHORUS.

SEMICH. I. With what a ruthless and destructive rage 1160

The Furies hurl their vengeful shafts around,  
And desolate the house of Œdipus!

What then remains for me? and how resolve?

Can I forbear to mourn thee, to attend thee  
And the sad tomb? Yet duty to the state, 1165

And reverence to its mandates awe my soul.

Thou shalt have many to lament thy fall:

While he, unwept, unpitied, unattended,

Save by a sister's solitary sorrows,

Sinks to the shades. Approve you this resolve?

1167 Eteocles.

1168 Polynices.

ÆSCH.—Q

SEMICHOR. II. To those, that wail the fate of Polynices, 1171

Let the state act its pleasure. We will go,  
Attend his funeral rites, and aid his sister  
To place him in the earth. Such sorrows move  
The common feelings of humanity ; 1175  
And, where the deed is just, the state approves it.

SEMICHOR. I. And we with him, as justice and the state

Concur to call us. Next the immortal gods,  
And Jove's high power, this valiant youth came forth  
The guardian of his country, and repell'd 1180  
The assault of foreign foes, whose raging force  
Rush'd like a torrent threat'ning to o'erwhelm us

# **A G A M E M N O N**



**DRAMATIS PERSONÆ**

**WATCHMAN,**  
**CLYTEMNESTRA,**  
**HERALD,**  
**AGAMEMNON,**  
**CASSANDRA,**  
**ÆGISTHUS,**  
**CHORUS of Argive Senators.**

# AGAMEMNON.

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## ARGUMENT.

During the absence of Agamemnon at the siege of Troy, his wife Clytemnestra forms an adulterous intercourse with Ægisthus, who prevails on the partner of his guilt to murder her husband on his return—The captive Cassandra, now the property of Agamemnon, foreseeing the destruction of her unhappy master, endeavours to avert his impending fate, which exposes her to the vengeance of the murderess, who openly glories in her guilt, and rewards the fidelity of the ill-fated prophetess by consigning her to an untimely death.

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## WATCHMAN.

Ye fav'ring gods, relieve me from this toil :  
Fix'd as a dog on Agamemnon's roof  
I watch the live-long year, observing hence  
The host of stars, that in the spangled skies  
Take their bright stations, and to mortals bring   5  
Winter and summer ; radiant rulers, when  
They set, or rising glitter through the night.  
Here now I watch, if haply I may see  
The blazing torch whose flame brings news from  
Troy,  
The signal of its ruin : these high hopes           10  
My royal mistress, thinking on her lord,  
Feeds in her heart. Meanwhile the dews of night  
Fall on my couch, unvisited by dreams ;  
For fear, lest sleep should close my eyes, repels  
The soft intruder. When my spirits prompt me   15  
To raise the song, or hum the solemn notes  
Preventing slumber, then I sigh, and wail

P

The state of this unhappy house, no more  
 Well-order'd as of old. But may my toils  
 Be happily relieved! Blaze, thou bright flame, 20  
 Herald of joy, blaze through the gloomy shades.—  
 And it does blaze.—Hail, thou auspicious flame,  
 That streaming through the night denouncest joy,  
 Welcomed with many a festal dance in Argos!—  
 In the queen's ear I'll halloo this, and rouse her 25  
 From her soft couch with speed, that she may teach  
 The royal dome to echo with the strains  
 Of choral warblings greeting this bless'd fire,  
 Bright sign that Troy is taken. Nor shall I  
 Forbear the prelude to the dance before her: 30  
 For by this watch, so prosperously concluded,  
 I to my masters shall assure good fortune.  
 Shall I then see my king return'd, once more  
 To grace this house? and shall this hand once more  
 Hang on his friendly hand?—I could unfold 35  
 A tale.—But, hush! my tongue is chained; these  
 walls,  
 Could they but speak, would make discoveries.  
 There are who know this, and to them this hint  
 Were plain; to those that know it not, mysterious.

## CHORUS.

The tenth slow year rolls on, since great in arms 40  
 The noble sons of Atreus, each exalted  
 To majesty and empire, royal brothers,  
 Led hence a thousand ships, the Argive fleet,  
 Big with the fate of Priam and of Troy;  
 A warlike preparation; their bold breasts 45  
 Breathing heroic ardour to high deeds;  
 Like vultures, which their unplumed offspring lost,  
 Whirl many a rapid flight, for that their toil  
 To guard their young was vain: till some high power,  
 For they are dear to Phœbus, dear to Pan, 50  
 And Jove, with pity hears their shrill-voiced grief,  
 And sends, though late, the fury to avenge  
 Their plunder'd nests on the unpitied spoilers.  
 So now the power of hospitable Jove

Arms against Paris, for the oft-wedded dame, 55  
The sons of Atreus, bent to plunge the hosts  
Of Greece and Troy in all the toils, that sink  
The body down, the firm knee bow'd in dust,  
And the strong spear, ere conquest crowns their  
helms,.

Shiver'd in battle. These are what they are, 60  
And Fate directs the event: nor the bent knee,  
Libation pure, or supplicating tear,  
Can soothe the stern rage of those merciless powers  
In whose cold shrine no hallow'd flame ascends.  
But we, our age-enfeebled limbs unfit 65

For martial toils, inglorious here remain,  
The staff supporting our weak steps, like children:  
For as the infant years have not attain'd  
The military vigour, wither'd age

Crawls through the streets like helpless infancy, 70  
And passes as a day-dream.—But what tidings,  
What circumstances of fair event hath reach'd  
Thy royal ears, daughter of Tyndarus,  
Inducing thee to send the victims round?

The shrines of all the gods, whose guardian cares 75  
Watch o'er this state, be they enthroned in heaven,  
Or rule beneath the earth, blaze with thy presents;  
And from the imperial dome a lengthen'd line  
Of torches shoot their lustre to the skies.

O tell me what is fit for me to know, 80  
And prudence suffers to be told; speak peace  
To this anxiety, which one while swells  
Presaging ill, and one while from the victims  
Catches a gleam of hope, whose cheering ray  
Breaks through the gloom that darkens o'er my soul.

STROPHE.

It swells upon my soul; I feel the power 86  
To hail the auspicious hour,

55 Helena was said to have been carried off by Theseus, before she was wedded to Menelaus.

64 The Fates and the Furies, at whose rites no fire was used.

When their brave hosts marching in firm array,  
     The heroes led the way.  
     The fire of youth glows in each vein,      90  
 And heaven-born confidence inspires the strain.  
     Pleased the omen to record,  
     That to Troy's ill-fated strand  
     Led each monarch, mighty lord,  
     Led the bold confederate band,      95  
 The strong spear quiv'ring in their vengeful hand.  
     Full in each royal chieftain's view  
     A royal eagle whirls his flight ;  
     In plumage one of dusky hue,  
     And one his dark wings edged with white ; 100  
 Swift to the imperial mansion take their way,  
     And in their armed talons bear,  
     Seized in its flight, a pregnant hare,  
     And in those splendid seats enjoy their prey.  
 Sound high the strain, the swelling notes prolong,  
 Till conquest listens to the raptured song.      106

## ANTISTROPHE.

The venerable seer, whose skill divine  
     Knows what the fates design,  
 On each bold chief, that for the battle burns,  
     His glowing eyeball turns ;      110  
     And thus in high prophetic strains  
 The ravening eagles and their prey explains :—  
     " Priam's haughty town shall fall :  
     Slow they roll, the destined hours ;  
     Fate and fury shake her wall ;      115  
     Vengeance wide the ruin pours,  
 And conquest seizes all her treasured stores.  
     Ah, may no storm from the angry sky  
     Burst dreadful o'er this martial train,  
     Nor check their ardour, flaming high      120  
     To pour the war o'er Troy's proud plain !  
 Wrath kindles in the chaste Diana's breast :  
     Gorged with the pregnant mother's blood,  
     And, ere the birth, her hapless brood,

107 Calchas.

Hell-hounds of Jove, she hates your horrid feast.  
 Sound high the strain, the swelling notes pro-  
 long, 126  
 Till conquest listens to the raptured song.

EPODE.

“ The virgin goddess of the chase,  
 Fair from the spangled dew-drops that adorn  
 The breathing flow’rets of the morn, 130  
 Protectress of the infant race  
 Of all that haunt the tangled grove,  
 Or o’er the rugged mountains rove,  
 She, beautiful queen, commands me to declare  
 What by the royal birds is shown, 135  
 Signal of conquest, omen fair,  
 But darken’d by her awful frown.  
 God of the distant-wounding bow,  
 Thee, Pæan, thee I call ; hear us, and aid ;  
 Ah, may not the offended maid 140  
 Give the sullen gales to blow,  
 Adverse to this eager train,  
 And bar the unnavigable main :  
 Nor other sacrifice demand,  
 At whose barbaric rites no feast is spread ; 145  
 But Discord rears her horrid head,  
 And calls around her murd’rous band :  
 Leagued with hate, and fraud, and fear,  
 Nor king, nor husband they revere ;  
 Indignant o’er a daughter weep, 150  
 And burn to stamp their vengeance deep.”  
 Prophetic thus the reverend Chalcas spoke,  
 Marking the imperial eagles’ whirling wings ;  
 From his rapt lips the joyful presage broke,  
 Success and glory to the embattled kings, 155  
 Sound high the strain, the according notes prolong,  
 Till conquest listens to the raptured song.

STROPHE I.

O thou, that sitt’st supreme above,  
 Whatever name thou deign’st to hear,  
 Unblamed may I pronounce thee Jove ! 160

Immersed in deep and holy thought,  
 If rightly I conjecture aught,  
 Thy power I must revere :  
 Else vainly toss'd the anxious mind  
 Nor truth, nor calm repose can find. 165  
 Feeble and helpless to the light  
 The proudest of man's race arose,  
 Though now, exulting in his might,  
 Dauntless he rushes on his foes ;  
 Great as he is, in dust he lies ; 170  
 He meets a greater and he dies.

## ANTISTROPHE I.

He that, when conquest brightens round,  
 Swells the triumphal strain to Jove,  
 Shall ever with success be crown'd.  
 Yet often, when to wisdom's seat 175  
 Jove deigns to guide man's erring feet,  
 His virtues to improve ;  
 He to affliction gives command  
 To form him with her chast'ning hand :  
 The memory of her rigid lore, 180  
 On the sad heart imprinted deep,  
 Attends him through day's active hour,  
 Nor in the night forsakes his sleep.  
 Instructed thus thy grace we own,  
 O thou that sitt'st on heaven's high throne ! 185

## STROPHE II.

When now in Aulis' rolling bay  
 His course the reflux floods refused,  
 And sick'ning with inaction lay  
 In dead repose the exhausted train,  
 Did the firm chief of chance complain ? 190  
 No prophet he accused ;  
 His eyes towards Chalcis bent he stood,  
 And silent mark'd the surging flood.  
 Sullen the winds from Strymon sweep,  
 Mischance and famine in the blast, 195  
 Ceaseless torment the angry deep,  
 The cordage rend, the vessels waste,

With tedious and severe delay  
Wear the fresh flower of Greece away.

ANTISTROPHE II.

When in Diana's name, the seer 200

Pronounced the dreadful remedy,  
More than the stormy sea severe,  
Each chieftain stood in grief profound,  
And smote his sceptre on the ground :

Then with a rising sigh, 205

'The monarch, while the big tears roll,  
Express'd the anguish of his soul :—

" Dreadful the sentence : not to obey,  
Vengeance and ruin close us round :

Shall then the sire his daughter slay, 210

In youth's fresh bloom with beauty crown'd ?

Shall on these hands her warm blood flow ?

Cruel alternative of wo !

STROPHE III.

This royal fleet, this martial host,

The cause of Greece, shall I betray, 215

The monarch in the father lost ?

To calm these winds, to smooth this flood,

Diana's wrath a virgin's blood

Demands : 'tis ours to obey."

Bound in necessity's iron chain, 220

Reluctant nature strives in vain :

Impure, unholy thoughts succeed,

And dark'ning o'er his bosom roll ;

While madness prompts the ruthless deed,

Tyrant of the misguided soul : 225

Stern on the fleet he rolls his eyes,

And dooms the hateful sacrifice.

ANTISTROPHE III.

Arm'd in a woman's cause, around

Fierce for the war the princes rose ;

No place affrighted pity found. 230

In vain the virgin's streaming tear,

Her cries in vain, her pleading prayer

Her agonizing woes.



Could the fond father hear unmoved ?  
 The Fates decreed : the king approved : 235  
 Then to the attendants gave command  
     Decent her flowing robes to bind ;  
 Prone on the altar with strong hand  
 To place her like a spotless hind ;  
 And check her sweet voice that no sound 240  
 Unhallow'd might the rites confound.

## EPODE.

Rent on the earth her maiden veil she throws,  
     That emulates the rose ;  
 And on the sad attendants rolling  
 The trembling lustre of her dewy eyes, 245  
 Their grief-impassion'd souls controlling,  
     That ennobled, modest grace,  
 Which the mimic pencil tries  
     In the imaged form to trace,  
     The breathing picture shows : 250  
 And as, amid his festal pleasures,  
     Her father oft rejoiced to hear  
 Her voice in soft mellifluous measures  
     Warble the sprightly-fancied air ;  
 So now in act to speak the virgin stands : 255  
     But when, the third libation paid,  
 She heard her father's dread commands  
     Enjoining silence, she obey'd :  
     And for her country's good,  
 With patient, meek, submissive mind 260  
     To her hard fate resign'd,  
     Pour'd out the rich stream of her blood.

What since hath pass'd I know not, nor relate ;  
     But never did the prophet speak in vain,  
 The afflicted, anxious for his future fate, 265  
     Looks forward, and with hope relieves his pain.  
 But since the inevitable ill will come,  
     Much knowledge to much misery is allied ;  
 Why strive we then to anticipate the doom,  
     Which happiness and wisdom wish to hide ? 270

Yet let this careful, age-enfeebled band  
 Breathe from our inmost soul one ardent vow,  
 Now the sole guardians of this Apian land ;—  
 “ May fair success with glory bind her brow !”

CLYTEMNESTRA, CHORUS.

CHO. With reverence Clytemnestra, I approach  
 Thy greatness ; honour due to her that fills 276  
 The royal seat, yet vacant of its lord.  
 If aught of glad import hath reach'd thy ear,  
 Or to fair hope the victim bleeds, I wish,  
 But with submission to thy will, to hear. 280

CLY. The joy-importing morn springs, as they say,  
 From night, her mother. Thou shalt hear a joy  
 Beyond thy hopes to hear : the town of Priam  
 Is fall'n beneath the conquering arms of Greece.

CHO. What said'st thou ? Passing credence fled  
 thy word. 285

CLY. In Troy Greece triumphs. Speak I clearly  
 now ?

CHO. Joy steals upon me, and calls forth the tear.

CLY. Thy glist'ning eye bespeaks an honest heart.

CHO. Does aught of certain proof confirm these  
 tidings ?

CLY. It does : why not ? unless the gods deceive  
 us. 290

CHO. Perchance the visions of persuasive dreams.

CLY. Sport of the slumb'ring soul ; they move not  
 me.

CHO. Hath then some winged rumour spread these  
 transports ?

CLY. As a raw girl's, thou hold'st my judgment  
 cheap.

CHO. How long hath ruin crush'd this haughty  
 city ? 295

CLY. This night, that gave this infant morning  
 birth.

CHO. What speed could be the herald of this  
 news ?

ÆSCH.—R

CLY. The fire, that from the height of Ida sent  
 Its streaming light, as from the announcing flame  
 Torch blazed to torch. First Ida to the steep 300  
 Of Lemnos : Athos' sacred height received  
 The mighty splendour ; from the surging back  
 Of the Hellespont the vig'rous blaze held on  
 Its smiling way, and like the orient sun  
 Illumes with golden-gleaming rays the head 305  
 Of rocky Macetas ; nor lingers there,  
 Nor winks unheedful, but its warning flames  
 Darts to the streams of Euripus, and gives  
 Its glitt'ring signal to the guards that hold  
 Their high watch on Mesapius. These enkindle 310  
 The joy-announcing fires, that spread the blaze  
 To where Erica hoar its shaggy brow  
 Waves rudely. Unimpair'd the active flame  
 Bounds o'er the level of Asopus, like  
 The jocund moon, and on Cithæron's steep 315  
 Wakes a successive flame ; the distant watch  
 Agnize its shine, and raise a brighter fire,  
 That o'er the lake Gorgopis streaming holds  
 Its rapid course, and on the mountainous heights  
 Of Ægiplanctus huge, swift-shooting spreads 320  
 The lengthen'd line of light. Thence onwards  
 waves

Its fiery tresses, eager to ascend  
 The crags of Prone, frowning in their pride  
 O'er the Saronic gulf : it leaps, it mounts  
 The summit of Arachne, whose high head 325  
 Looks down on Argos : to this royal seat  
 Thence darts the light that from the Idæan fire  
 Derives its birth. Rightly in order thus  
 Each to the next consigns the torch, that fills  
 The bright succession, while the first in speed 330  
 Vies with the last : the promised signal this  
 Given by my lord to announce the fall of Troy.

CHO. Anon my grateful praise shall rise to heaven :  
 Now, lady, would I willingly attend  
 Through each glad circumstance the wondrous  
 tale

CLY. This day the conquering Greeks are lords of  
Troy. 336

Methinks I hear the various 'clamours rise  
Discordant through the city. Pour thou oil  
In the same vase and vinegar, in vain  
Wouldst thou persuade the unsocial streams to mix :  
The captives' and the conqueror's voice distinct, 341  
Marks of their different fortune, mayst thou hear :  
Those rolling on the bodies of the slain,  
Friends, husbands, brothers, fathers ; the weak arms  
Of children clasp'd around the bleeding limbs 345  
Of hoary age, lament their fall, their necks  
Bent to the yoke of slavery : eager these  
From the fierce toils of war, who through the gloom  
Of night ranged wide, fly on the spoils, as chance,  
Not order, leads them ; in the Trojan houses, 350  
Won by their spears, they walk at large, relieved  
From the cold dews dropp'd from the unshelter'd sky ;  
And at the approach of eve, like those whose power  
Commands security, the easy night  
Shall sleep unguarded. If with hallow'd rites 355  
They venerate the gods that o'er the city,  
With those that o'er the vanquish'd country rule,  
And reverence their shrines, the conquering troops  
Shall not be conquer'd. May no base desire,  
No guilty wish urge them, enthrall'd to gain, 360  
To break through sacred laws. Behooves them now,  
With safety in their train, backward to plough  
The reflux wave. Should they return exposed  
To the anger of the gods, vengeance would wake  
To seize its prey, might they perchance escape 365  
Life's incidental ills. From me thou hearest  
A woman's sentiment ; and much I wish,  
Their glories by no rude mischance depress'd,  
To cull from many blessings the most precious.

CNO. With manly sentiment thy wisdom, lady,  
Speaks well. Confiding in thy suasive signs, 371  
Prepare we to address the gods ; our strains  
Shall not without their meed of honour rise.

## PROSODE.

Supreme of kings, Jove ; and thou, friendly Night,  
 That wide o'er heaven's star-spangled plain 375  
     Holdest thy awful reign ;  
     Thou, that with resistless might  
     O'er Troy's proud towers, and destined state,  
     Hast thrown the secret net of fate,  
 In whose enormous sweep the young, the old, 380  
     Without distinction roll'd,  
     Are with unsparing fury dragg'd away  
     To slavery and wo a prey :  
 Thee, hospitable Jove, whose vengeful power  
     These terrors o'er the foe has spread, 385  
     Thy bow long bent at Paris' head,  
     Whose arrows know their time to fly,  
     Not hurtling aimless in the sky,  
     Our pious strains adore.

## STROPHE I.

The hand of Jove will they not own ; 394  
     And, as his marks they trace,  
 Confess he will'd, and it was done !  
     Who now of earth-born race  
 Shall dare contend that his high power  
     Deigns not with eye severe to view 396  
 The wretch that tramples on his law !  
 Hence with this impious lore :  
     Learn that the sons accursed shall rue  
     The madly daring father's pride,  
 That furious drew the unrighteous sword, 404  
 High in his house the rich spoils stored,  
     And the avenging gods defied.  
     But be it mine to draw  
 From wisdom's fount, pure as it flows,  
 That calm of soul which virtue only knows. 408  
     For vain the shield that wealth shall spread  
     To guard the proud oppressor's head,  
 Who dares the rites of Justice to confound,  
     And spurn her altars to the ground.

ANTISTROPHE I.

But suasive is the voice of Vice, 410  
 That spreads the insidious snare :  
 She, not conceal'd, through her disguise  
 Emits a livid glare.  
 Her vot'ry, like adult'rate brass,  
 Unfaithful to its use, unsound, 415  
 Proves the dark baseness of his soul ;  
 Fond as a boy to chase  
 The winged bird light-flitting round,  
 And, bent on his pernicious play,  
 Draws desolation on his state. 420  
 His vows no god regards, when Fate  
 In vengeance sweeps the wretch away.  
 With base intent and foul,  
 Each hospitable law defied,  
 From Sparta's king thus Paris stole his bride. 425  
 To Greece she left the shield, the spear,  
 The naval armament of war ;  
 And, bold in ill, to Troy's devoted shore  
 Destruction for her dowry bore.

STROPHE II.

When through the gates her easy way 430  
 She took, his pensive breast  
 Each prophet smote in deep dismay,  
 And thus his grief express'd :—  
 What woes this royal mansion threat,  
 This mansion, and its mighty lord ! 435  
 Where now the chaste connubial bed ?  
 The traces of her feet,  
 By love to her bless'd consort led,  
 Where now ? Ah, silent, see, she stands ;  
 Each glowing tint, each radiant grace, 440  
 That charm the enraptured eye, we trace ;  
 And still the blooming form commands,  
 Still honour'd still adored,  
 Though careless of her former loves  
 Far o'er the rolling sea the wanton roves ; 445

The husband with a bursting sigh,  
 Turns from the pictured fair his eye ;  
 While love, by absence fed, without control  
 Tumultuous rushes on his soul.

## ANTISTROPHE II.

Oft as short slumbers close his eyes, 450  
 His sad soul soothed to rest,  
 The dream-created visions rise,  
 With all her charms impress'd :  
 But vain the ideal scene, that smiles  
 With rapt'rous love and warm delight ; 455  
 Vain his fond hopes : his eager arms  
 The fleeting form beguiles,  
 On sleep's quick pinions passing light.  
 Such griefs, and more severe than these,  
 Their sad gloom o'er the palace spread ; 460  
 Thence stretch their melancholy shade,  
 And darken o'er the realms of Greece.  
 Struck with no false alarms  
 Each house its homefelt sorrow knows, 464  
 Each bleeding heart is pierced with keenest woes ;  
 When for the herb, sent to share  
 The glories of the crimson war,  
 Naught, save his arms stain'd with their master's  
 gore,  
 And his cold ashes reach the shore.

## STROPHE III.

Thus in the dire exchange of war 470  
 Does Mars the balance hold ;  
 Helms are the scales, the beam a spear,  
 And blood is weigh'd for gold.  
 Thus, for the warrior, to his friends  
 His sad remains, a poor return, 475  
 Saved from the sullen fire that rose  
 On Troy's cursed shore, he sends,  
 Placed decent in the mournful urn.  
 With many a tear their dead they weep,  
 Their names with many a praise resound ; 480  
 One for his skill in arms renown'd ;

One that amid the slaughtered heap  
 Of fierce-conflicting foes  
 Glorious in beauty's cause he fell :  
 Yet 'gainst the avenging chiefs their murmurs swell  
 In silence. Some in youth's fresh bloom 486  
 Beneath Troy's towers possess a tomb ;  
 Their bodies buried on the distant strand,  
 Seizing in death the hostile land.

ANTISTROPHE III.

How dreadful, when the people raise 490  
 Loud murmurs mix'd with hate !  
 Yet this the tribute greatness pays  
 For its exalted state.  
 Ev'n now some dark and horrid deed  
 By my presaging soul is fear'd ; 495  
 For never with unheedful eyes,  
 When slaughter'd thousands bleed,  
 Did the just powers of heaven regard  
 The carnage of the ensanguined plain.  
 'The ruthless and oppressive power 500  
 May triumph for its little hour ;  
 Full soon with all their vengeful train  
 The sullen Furies rise,  
 Break his fell force, and whirl him down 504  
 Through life's dark paths, unpitied and unknown.  
 And dangerous is the pride of fame,  
 Like the red lightning's dazzling flame.  
 Nor envied wealth, nor conquest let me gain,  
 Nor drag the conqueror's hateful chain. 509

EPODE.

But from these fires far streaming through the night  
 Fame through the town her progress takes,  
 And rapt'rous joy awakes ;  
 If with truth's auspicious light  
 They shine, who knows ! Her sacred reign  
 Nor fraud, nor falsehood dares profane. 515  
 But who, in wisdom's school so lightly taught,  
 Suffers his ardent thought  
 From these informing flames to catch the fire,  
 Full soon perchance in grief to expire !



Yet when a woman holds the sovereign sway, 520  
 Obsequious wisdom learns to bow,  
 And hails the joy it does not know ;  
 Though, as the glitt'ring visions roll  
 Before her easy, credulous soul,  
 Their glories fade away. 525

CLY. Whether these fires, that with successive  
 signals  
 Blaze through the night, be true, or like a dream  
 Play with a sweet delusion on the soul,  
 Soon shall we know. A herald from the shore  
 I see ; branches of olive shade his brows. 530  
 That cloud of dust, raised by his speed, assures me  
 That neither speechless, nor enkindling flames  
 Along the mountains, will he signify  
 His message ; but his tongue shall greet our ears  
 With words of joy ; far from my soul the thought  
 Of other, than confirm these fav'ring signals. 536  
 CHO. May he that to this state shall form a wish  
 Of other aim, on his own head receive it !

CLYTEMNESTRA, CHORUS, HERALD.

HER. Hail, thou paternal soil of Argive earth !  
 In the fair light of the tenth year to thee 540  
 Return'd, from the sad wreck of many hopes  
 This one I save ; saved from despair ev'n this ;  
 For never thought I in this honour'd earth  
 To share in death the portion of a tomb.  
 Hail then, loved earth ; hail, thou bright sun ; and  
 thou, 545  
 Great guardian of my country, supreme Jove ;  
 Thou, Pythian king, thy shafts no longer wing'd  
 For our destruction ; on Scamander's banks  
 Enough we mourn'd thy wrath ; propitious now

548 This alludes to the pestilence in the Grecian camp, inflicted by Apollo as a punishment for the affront offered to his priest Chryses.

Come, king Apollo, our defence. And all 550  
 Ye gods, that o'er the works of war preside,  
 I now invoke ; thee, Mercury, my avenger,  
 Revered by heralds, that from thee derive  
 Their high employ ; you heroes, to the war  
 That sent us, friendly now receive our troops, 555  
 The relics of the spear. Imperial walls,  
 Mansion of kings, ye seats revered ; ye gods,  
 That to the golden sun before these gates  
 Present your honour'd forms ; if e'er of old  
 Those eyes with favour have beheld the king, 560  
 Receive him now, after this length of time,  
 With glory ; for he comes, and with him brings  
 To you, and all, a light that cheers this gloom ;  
 Then greet him well ; such honour is his meed,  
 The mighty king, that with the mace of Jove 565  
 The avenger, wherewith he subdues the earth,  
 Hath levell'd with the dust the towers of Troy ;  
 Their altars are o'erturn'd, their sacred shrines,  
 And all the race destroy'd. This iron yoke  
 Fix'd on the neck of Troy, victorious comes 570  
 The great Atrides, of all mortal men  
 Worthy of highest honours. Paris now,  
 And the perfidious state, shall boast no more  
 His proud deeds unrevenge'd ; stripp'd of his spoils,  
 The debt of justice for his thefts, his rapines, 575  
 Paid amply, o'er his father's house he spreads  
 With two-fold loss the wide-involving ruin.

CLY. Joy to thee, herald of the Argive host !

HER. For joy like this, death were a cheap exchange.

CLY. Strong thy affection to thy native soil. 580

HER. So strong, the tear of joy starts from my eye.

CLY. What, hath this sweet infection reach'd ev'n you ?

HER. Beyond the power of language have I felt it.

553 Mercury, as the messenger of the gods, was esteemed the patron of heralds.

Q

CLY. The fond desire of those whose equal love—

HER. This of the army say'st thou, whose warm  
love 585

Streams to this land? Is this thy fond desire?

CLY. Such, that I oft have breathed the secret  
sigh.

HER. Whence did the army cause this anxious sad-  
ness?

CLY. Silence I long have held a healing balm.

HER. The princes absent, hadst thou whom to fear?

CLY. To use thy words, death were a wish'd ex-  
change. 591

HER. Well is the conflict ended. In the tide  
Of so long time, if mid the easy flow  
Of wish'd events some tyrannous blast assail us,  
What marvel? Who, save the bless'd gods, can  
claim 595

Through life's whole course an unmix'd happiness?  
Should I relate our toils, our wretched plight  
Wedge'd in our narrow ill-provided cabins,  
Each irksome hour was loaded with fatigues.  
Yet these were slight assays to those worse hard-  
ships 600

We suffer'd on the shore: our lodging near  
The walls of the enemy, the dews of heaven  
Fell on us from above, the damps beneath  
From the moist marsh annoy'd us, shrouded ill  
In shaggy cov'rings. Or should one relate 605  
The winter's keen blasts, which from Ida's snows  
Breathe froze, that, pierced through all their plumes,  
the birds

Shiver and die; or the extreme heat that scalds,  
When in his mid-day caves the sea reclines,  
And not a breeze disturbs his calm repose. 610  
But why lament these sufferings? they are pass'd;  
Pass'd to the dead indeed; they lie, no more  
Anxious to rise. What then avails to count  
Those whom the wasteful war hath swept away,  
And with their loss afflict the living? Rather 615

Bid we farewell to misery : in our scale,  
 Who haply of the Grecian host remain,  
 The good preponderates, and in counterpoise  
 Our loss is light ; and after all our toils  
 By sea and land, before yon golden sun 620  
 It is our glorious privilege to boast,  
 "At length from vanquish'd Troy our warlike troops  
 Have to the gods of Greece brought home these  
 spoils,  
 And in their temples, to record our conquests,  
 Fix'd these proud trophies." Those that hear this  
 boast 625  
 It well becomes to gratulate the state,  
 And the brave chiefs, revering Jove's high power  
 That graced our conquering arms. Thou hast my  
 message.

CHO. Thy words convince me ; all my doubts are  
 vanish'd :

But scrupulous inquiry grows with age. 630  
 On Clytemnestra and her house this charge,  
 Blessing ev'n me with the rich joy, devolves.

CLY. Long since my voice raised high each note  
 of joy,  
 When through the night the streaming blaze first  
 came,  
 And told us Troy was taken : not unblamed 635  
 That, as a woman lightly credulous,  
 I let a mountain fire transport my soul  
 With the fond hope that Ilion's haughty towers  
 Were humbled in the dust. At this rebuke  
 Though somewhat shaken, yet I sacrificed ; 640  
 And, as weak women wont, one voice of joy  
 Awoke another, till the city rang  
 Through all its streets : and at the hallow'd shrines  
 Each raised the pious strains of gratitude,  
 And fann'd the altar's incense-breathing flame. 645  
 But it is needless to detain thee longer ;  
 Soon from the king's own lips shall I learn all.  
 How best I may receive my honoured lord,

And grace his wish'd return, now claims my speed.  
 Can heaven's fair beam show a fond wife a sight  
 More grateful than her husband from his wars 651  
 Return'd with glory, when she opes the gate,  
 And springs to welcome him? Tell my lord this,  
 That he may hasten his desir'd return,  
 And tell him he will find his faithful wife, 655  
 Such as he left her, a domestic creature  
 To him all fondness, to his enemies  
 Irreconcilable; and tell him, too,  
 That ten long years have not effaced the seal  
 Of constancy: that never knew I pleasure 660  
 In the blamed converse of another man,  
 More than the virgin metal in the mines  
 Knows an adulterate and debasing mixture.

HER. This high boast, lady, sanctified by truth,  
 Is not unseemly in thy princely rank. 665

HERALD, CHORUS.

CHO. This, for thy information, hath she spoken  
 With dignity and truth. Now, tell me, herald,  
 Of Sparta's king wish I to question thee,  
 The pride of Greece: returns he safe with you

HER. Never can I esteem a falsehood honest, 670  
 Though my friends long enjoy the sweet delusion.

CHO. What then if thou relate an honest truth?  
 From this distinction the conjecture's easy.

HER. Him from the Grecian fleet our eyes have  
 lost  
 The hero and his ship. This is the truth. 675

CHO. Chanced this when in your sight he weigh'd  
 from Troy?

Or in a storm, that rent him from the fleet?

HER. Rightly is thy conjecture aim'd, in brief  
 Touching the long recital of our loss.

CHO. How deem'd the other mariners of this? 680  
 That the ship perish'd, or rode out the storm?

HER. Who save yon sun, the regent of the earth,  
 Can give a clear and certain information?

CHO. How saidst thou then a storm, not without  
loss,

Wing'd with heaven's fury, toss'd the shatter'd fleet.

HER. It is not meet, with inauspicious tongue 686  
Spreading ill tidings, to profane a day

Sacred to festal joy: the gods require  
Their pure rites undisturb'd. When with a brow  
Witness of wo, the messenger relates 690

Unwelcome news, defeats, and slaughter'd armies,  
The wound with general grief affects the state;  
And with particular and private sorrow  
Full many a house, for many that have fall'n  
Victims to Mars, who to his bloody car 695  
Delights to yoke his terrors, sword and spear.

A pæan to the Furies would become  
The bearer of such pond'rous heap of ills.  
My tidings are of conquest and success  
Diffusing joy: with these glad sounds how mix 700  
Distress, and speak of storms, and angry gods?  
The powers, before most hostile, now conspired,  
Fire and the sea, in ruin reconciled:

And in a night of tempest wild from Thrace  
In all their fury rush'd the howling winds; 705  
Toss'd by the forceful blasts ship against ship  
In hideous conflict dash'd or disappear'd,  
Driven at the boist'rous whirlwind's dreadful will.

But when the sun's fair light returned, we see  
Bodies of Grecians, and the wreck of ships 710  
Float on the chafed foam of the Ægean sea.

Us and our ship some god (the power of man  
Were all too weak) holding the helm preserved  
Unhurt, or interceding for our safety;  
And Fortune the deliverer steer'd our course 715  
To shun the waves, that near the harbour's mouth  
Boil high, or break upon the rocky shore.

Escap'd the ingulfing sea, yet scarce secure  
Of our escape, through the fair day we view 720  
With sighs the recent sufferings of the host  
Cov'ring the sea with wrecks. If any breathe

This vital air, they deem us lost, as we  
 Think the same ruin theirs. Fair fall the event!  
 But first and chief expect the Spartan king  
 To arrive; if yet one ray of yon bright sun 725  
 Beholds him living, through the care of Jove,  
 Who wills not to destroy that royal race,  
 Well may we hope to joy in his return.  
 Having heard this, know thou hast heard the truth.

## CHORUS.

## STROPHE I.

Is there to names a charm profound 730  
 Expressive of their fates assign'd,  
 Mysterious potency of sound,  
 And truth in wondrous accord join'd?  
 Why else this fatal name?  
 That Helen and destruction are the same? 735  
 Affianced in contention led,  
 The spear her dowry, to the bridal bed;  
 With desolation in her train,  
 Fatal to martial hosts, to rampired towers,  
 From the rich fragrance of her gorgeous bowers,  
 Descending to the main, 741  
 She hastes to spread her flying sails,  
 And calls the earth-born zephyr's gales  
 While heroes, breathing vengeance, snatch their  
 shields,  
 And trace her light oars o'er the pathless waves, 745  
 To the thick shades fresh waving o'er those fields,  
 Which Simois with his silver windings laves.

## ANTISTROPHE I.

To Troy the shining mischief came,  
 Before her young-eyed pleasures play;  
 But in the rear with steadfast aim 750  
 Grim-visaged vengeance marks his prey,  
 Waiting the dreadful hour  
 The terrors of offended heav'n to pour

735 The name Helen signifies the Destroyer.

On those that dared, an impious train,  
 The rights of hospitable Jove profane ; 755  
 Nor revered that sacred song,  
 Whose melting strains the bride's approach declare,  
 As Hymen wakes the rapture-breathing air ;  
 Far other notes belong,  
 The voice of mirth now heard no more, 760  
 To Priam's state : its ruins o'er  
 Wailing instead, distress, and loud lament ;  
 Long sorrows sprung from that unholy bed,  
 And many a curse in heartfelt anguish sent  
 On its wo-wedded Paris' hated head. 765

STROPHE II.

The woodman, from his thirsty lair,  
 Reft of his dam a lion bore :  
 Fostered his future foe with care  
 To mischiefs he must soon deplore :  
 Gentle and tame while young, 770  
 Harmless he frisk'd the fondling babes among ;  
 Oft in the father's bosom lay,  
 Oft lick'd his feeding hand in fawning play ;  
 Till, conscious of his firmer age,  
 His lion race the lordly savage shows ; 775  
 No more his youth-protecting cottage knows,  
 But with insatiate rage  
 Flies on the flocks, a baleful guest,  
 And riots in the unbidden feast : 779  
 While through his mangled folds the hapless swain,  
 With horror sees the unbounded carnage spread,  
 And learns too late that from the infernal reign,  
 A priest of Ate in his house was bred.

ANTISTROPHE II.

To Ilion's towers in wanton state  
 With speed she wings her easy way ; 785  
 Soft gales obedient round her wait,  
 And pant on the delighted sea.  
 Attendant on her side  
 The richest ornaments of splendid pride



The darts, whose golden points inspire, 790  
 Shot from her eyes, the flames of soft desire ;  
 The youthful bloom of rosy love,  
 That fills with ecstasy the willing soul ;  
 With duteous zeal obey her sweet control.

But such, the doom of Jove, 795  
 Vindictive round her nuptial bed,  
 With threat'ning mien and footstep dread,  
 Rushes, to Priam and his state severe,  
 To rend the bleeding heart his stern delight,  
 And from the bridal eye to force the tear, 800  
 Erinnyes, rising from the realms of night.

## EPODE.

From ev'ry mouth we oft have heard  
 This saying, for its age revered :  
 " With joy we see our offspring rise,  
 And, happy, who not childless dies : 805  
 But Fortune, when her flow'rets blow,  
 Oft bears the bitter fruit of wo."  
 Though these saws are as truths allow'd,  
 Thus I dare differ from the crowd :—  
 " One base deed, with prolific power, 810  
 Like its cursed stock, engenders more ;  
 But to the just, with blooming grace  
 Still flourishes, a beauteous race."

The old injustice joys to breed  
 Her young, instinct with villanous deed ; 815  
 The young her destined hour will find  
 To rush in mischief on mankind :  
 She too in Ate's murky cell  
 Brings forth the hideous child of hell,  
 A burden to the offended sky, 820  
 The power of bold impiety.

But Justice bids her ray divine  
 Ev'n on the low-roof'd cottage shine :  
 And beams her glories on the life,  
 That knows not fraud nor ruffian strife. 825

The gorgeous glare of gold, obtain'd  
By foul polluted hands, disdain'd  
She leaves, and with averted eyes  
To humbler, holier mansions flies ;  
And looking through the times to come 830  
Assigns each deed its righteous doom.

CHORUS, AGAMEMNON.

CHO. My royal lord, by whose victorious hand  
The towers of Troy are fall'n, illustrious son  
Of Atreus, with what words, what reverence  
Shall I address thee, not to o'erleap the bounds 835  
Of modest duty, nor to sink beneath  
An honourable welcome ? Some there are  
That form themselves to seem, more than to be,  
Transgressing honesty : to him that feels  
Misfortune's rugged hand, full many a tongue 840  
Shall drop condolence, though the unfeeling heart  
Knows not the touch of sorrow ; these again  
In fortune's summer gale with the like art  
Shall dress in forced smiles the unwilling face :  
But him the penetrating eye soon marks, 845  
That in the seemly garb of honest zeal  
Attempts to clothe his meager blandishments.  
When first in Helen's cause my royal lord  
Levied his host, let me not hide the truth,  
Notes, other than of music, echoed wide 850  
In loud complaints from such as deem'd him rash,  
And void of reason, by constraint to plant  
In breasts averse the martial soul, that glows  
Despising death. But now their eager zeal  
Streams friendly to those chiefs, whose prosp'rous  
valour 855  
Is crown'd with conquest. Soon then shalt thou  
learn,  
As each supports the state, or strives to rend it  
With faction, who reveres thy dignity.

AGA. To Argos first, and to my country gods,  
I bow with reverence, by whose holy guidance  
R

On Troy's proud towers I poured their righteous  
vengeance, 861

And now revisit safe my native soil.

No loud-tongued pleader heard, they judg'd the  
cause.

And in the bloody urn, without one vote  
Dissentient, cast the lots that fix'd the fate 865

Of Iliou and its sons: the other vase

Left empty, save of widow'd hope. The smoke  
Rolling in dusky wreaths, shows that the town  
Is fall'n; the fiery storm yet lives, and high  
The dying ashes toss rich clouds of wealth 870

Consumed. For this behooves us to the gods  
Render our grateful thanks, and that they spread  
The net of fate sweeping with angry ruin.

In beauty's cause the Argive monster rear'd  
Its bulk enormous, to the affrighted town 875

Portending devastation; in its womb  
Hiding embattled hosts, rush'd furious forth.

About the setting of the Pleiades;

And, as a lion rav'ning for its prey,  
Ramp'd o'er their walls, and lapp'd the blood of  
kings. 880

This to the gods address'd, I turn me now,  
Attentive to thy caution: I approve  
Thy just remark, and with my voice confirm it.

Few have the fortitude of soul to honour  
A friend's success, without a touch of envy; 885

For that malignant passion to the heart  
Cleaves close, and with a double burden loads

The man infected with it: first he feels  
In all their weight his own calamities,  
Then sighs to see the happiness of others. 890

This of my own experience have I learn'd;  
And this I know, that many, who in public  
Have borne the semblance of my firmest friends,

874 The wooden horse which caused the destruction of  
Troy.

Are but, the flatt'ring image of a shadow  
 Reflected from a mirror: save Ulysses 895  
 Alone, who, though averse to join our arms,  
 Yoked in his martial harness, from my side  
 Swerved not; living or dead be this his praise.  
 But what concerns our kingdom and the gods,  
 Holding a general council of the state, 900  
 We will consult; that what is well may keep  
 Its goodness permanent, and what requires  
 Our healing hand with mild severity  
 May be corrected. But my royal roof  
 Now will I visit, and before its hearths 905  
 Offer libations to the gods, who sent me  
 To this far distant war, and led me back.  
 Firm stands the victory that attends our arms.

CLYTEMNESTRA, AGAMEMNON, CASSANDRA, CHORUS.

CLY. Friends, fellow-citizens, whose counsels  
 guide

The state of Argos, in your reverend presence 910  
 A wife's fond love I blush not to disclose:  
 Thus habit softens dread. From my full heart  
 Will I recount my melancholy life  
 Through the long stay of my loved lord at Troy:  
 For a weak woman, in her husband's absence, 915  
 Pensive to sit and lonely in her house,  
 'Tis dismal, list'ning to each frightful tale:  
 First one alarms her, then another comes.  
 Charged with worse tidings. Had my poor lord  
 here  
 Suffer'd as many wounds as common fame 920  
 Reported, like a net he had been pierced:  
 Had he been slain oft as the loud-tongued rumour  
 Was noised abroad, this triple-form'd Geryon,  
 A second of the name, while yet alive,  
 For of the dead I speak not, well might boast 925  
 To have received his triple mail, to die  
 In each form singly. Such reports oppress'd me,  
 Till life became distasteful, and my hands  
 Were prompted oft to deeds of desperation.

Nor is thy son Orestes, the dear tie 930  
That binds us each to the other, present here  
To aid me, as he ought : nay, marvel not,  
The friendly Strophius with a right strong arm  
Protects him in Phocæa ; while his care  
Saw danger threat me in a double form, 935  
The loss of thee at Troy, the anarchy  
That might ensue, should madness drive the people  
To deeds of violence, as men are prompt  
Insultingly to trample on the fall'n :  
Such care dwells not with fraud. At thy return 940  
The gushing fountains of my tears are dried,  
Save that my eyes are weak with midnight watch-  
ings,  
Straining, through tears, if haply they might see  
Thy signal fires, that claim'd my fix'd attention.  
If they were closed in sleep, a silly fly 945  
Would, with its slightest murm'rings make me start,  
And wake me to more fears. For thy dear sake  
All this I suffer'd : but my jocund heart  
Forgets it all, while I behold my lord,  
My guardian, the strong anchor of my hope, 950  
The stately column that supports my house,  
Dear as an only child to a fond parent ;  
Welcome as land, which the toss'd mariner  
Beyond his hope describes ; welcome as day  
After a night of storms with fairer beams 955  
Returning ; welcome as the liquid lapse  
Of fountain to the thirsty traveller :  
So pleasant is it to escape the chain  
Of hard constraint. Such greeting I esteem  
Due to thy honour : let it not offend, 960  
For I have suffer'd much. But, my loved lord,  
Leave now that car ; nor on the bare ground set  
That royal foot, beneath whose mighty tread  
Troy trembled. Haste, ye virgins, to whose care  
This pleasing office is intrusted, spread 965  
The streets with tapestry ; let the ground be cover'd  
With richest purple, leading to the palace ;

970

975

990

AGA. My mind, be well assured, shall not be tainted.

**AGA.** Free, from my soul in prudence have I said it.

CLV. Had Priam's arms prevail'd, how had he acted?

**AGA.** On rich embroid'ry he had proudly trod.

CLV. Then dread not thou the invidious tongues  
of men.

**AGA.** Yet has the popular voice much potency.

**CLV. But the unenvied is not of the happy. 1000**

**AG.** Ill suits it thy soft sex to love contention.

CLY. To yield sometimes adds honour to the mighty.

AGA. Art thou so earnest to obtain thy wish ?

CLY. Let me prevail : indulge me with this conquest.

AGA. If such thy will, haste, some one, from my feet 1005

Unloose these high-bound buskins, lest some god  
Look down indignant, if with them I press  
These vests sea-tinctured : shame it were to spoil  
With unclean tread their rich and costly texture.  
Of these enough.—This stranger, let her find 1010  
A gentle treatment : from high heaven the god  
Looks with an eye of favour on the victor  
That bears his high state meekly ; for none wears  
Of his free choice the yoke of slavery :  
And she, of many treasures the prime flower 1015  
Selected by the troops, has follow'd me.  
Well, since I yield me vanquish'd by thy voice,  
I go, treading on purple, to my house.

CLY. Does not the sea, and who shall drain it,  
yield

Unfailing stores of these rich tints, that glow 1020  
With purple radiance ! These this lordly house  
Commands, bless'd with abundance, but to want  
A stranger. I had vow'd his foot should tread  
On many a vestment, when the victims bled,  
The hallow'd pledge which this fond breast devised  
For his return ; for while the vig'rous root 1026  
Maintains its grasp, the stately head shall rise,  
And with its waving foliage screen the house  
From the fierce dog-star's fiery pestilence :  
And on thy presence at thy household hearth, 1030  
Ev'n the cold winter feels a genial warmth :  
But when the hot sun in the unripe grape  
Matures the wine, the husband's perfect virtues  
Spread a refreshing coolness. Thou, O Jove,  
Source of perfection, perfect all my vows, 1035  
And with thy influence favour my intents !

CHORUS.

STROPHE I.

What may this mean ? Along the skies  
 Why do these dreadful portents roll ?  
 Visions of terror, spare my aching eyes,  
 Nor shake my sad presaging soul ! 1040  
 In accents dread, not tuned in vain,  
 Why bursts the free, unbidden strain ?  
 These are no phantoms of the night,  
 That vanish at the faithful light  
 Of steadfast confidence. Thou sober power, 1045  
 Whither, ah, whither art thou gone ?  
 For since the long-pass'd hour,  
 When first for Troy the naval band  
 Unmoor'd their vessels from the strand,  
 Thou hast not in my bosom fix'd thy throne. 1050

ANTISTROPHE I.

At length they come : these faithful eyes,  
 See them return'd to Greece again :  
 Yet, while the sullen lyre in silence lies,  
 Erinny's wakes the mournful strain :  
 Her dreadful powers possess my soul, 1055  
 And bid the untaught measures roll ;  
 Swell in rude notes the dismal lay,  
 And fright enchanting hope away ;  
 While, ominous of ill, grim-visaged care  
 Incessant whirls my tortured heart. 1060  
 Vain be each anxious fear !  
 Return, fair hope, thy seat resume,  
 Dispel this melancholy gloom,  
 And to my soul thy gladsome light impart !

STROPHE II.

Ah me, what hope ! This mortal state 1065  
 Nothing but cruel change can know.  
 Should cheerful Health our vig'rous steps await,  
 Enkindling all her roseate glow ;  
 Disease creeps on with silent pace,  
 And withers ev'ry blooming grace. 1070  
 Proud sails the bark ; the fresh gales breathe.  
 And dash her on the rocks beneath.



In the rich house her treasures Plenty pours,  
 Comes Sloth, and from her well-poised sling  
 Scatters the piled-up stores. 1075  
 Yet Disease makes not all her prey;  
 Nor sinks the bark beneath the sea:  
 And famine sees the heaven-sent harvest spring.

## ANTISTROPHE II.

But when forth-welling from the wound  
 The purple-streaming blood shall fall, 1080  
 And the warm tide disdain the reeking ground,  
 Who shall the vanish'd life recall?  
 Nor verse, nor music's magic power,  
 Nor the famed leech's boasted lore:  
 Not that his art restored the dead, 1085  
 Jove's thunder burst upon his head.  
 But that the Fates forbid, and chain my tongue,  
 My heart, at inspiration's call,  
 Would the rapt strain prolong:  
 Now all is dark; it raves in vain; 1090  
 And, as it pants with trembling pain,  
 Desponding feels its fiery transports fall.

## CLYTEMNESTRA, CASSANDRA, CHORUS.

CLY. Thou too, Cassandra, enter; since high  
 Jove,  
 Gracious to thee, hath placed thee in this house,  
 With many slaves to share the common rites, 1095  
 And deck the altar of the fav'ring god;  
 Come from that chariot, and let temperance rule  
 Thy lofty spirit: ev'n Alcmena's son,  
 Sold as a slave, submitted to the yoke  
 Perforce; and if Necessity's hard hand 1100  
 Hath sunk thee to this fortune, our high rank,  
 With greatness long acquainted, knows to use  
 Its pow'r with gentleness: the low-born wretch,  
 That from his mean degree rises at once

1084 Æsculapius

To unexpected riches, treats his slaves 1105  
With barbarous and unbounded insolence.  
From us thou wilt receive a juster treatment.

CHO. These are plain truths : since in the toils of  
fate

Thou art enclosed, submit, if thou canst brook  
Submission ; haply I advise in vain. 1110

CLY. If that her language, like the twittering  
swallow's,

Be not all barbarous and unknown, my words  
Within shall with persuasion move her mind.

CHO. She speaks what best beseems thy present  
state ;

Follow, submit, and leave that lofty car. 1115

CLY. I have not leisure here before the gates  
To attend on her ; for at the inmost altar,  
Blazing with sacred fires, the victims stand  
Devoted to the gods for his return  
So much beyond our hopes. If to comply 1120  
Thou form thy mind, delay not : if thy tongue  
Knows not to sound our language, let thy signs  
Supply the place of words ; speak with thy hand.

CHO. Of foreign birth, she understands us not ;  
But as new taken struggles in the net. 1125

CLY. 'Tis phrensy this, the impulse of a mind  
Disorder'd ; from a city lately taken  
She comes, and knows not how to bear the curb,  
'Till she has spent her rage in bloody foam.  
But I no more waste words to be disdain'd. 1130

CASSANDRA, CHORUS.

CHO. My words, for much I pity her, shall bear  
No mark of anger. Go, unhappy fair one,  
Forsake thy chariot ; reluctant learn  
To bear this new yoke of necessity.

CAS. Wo, wo ! O Earth ! Apollo, O Apollo ! 1135

CHO. Why with that voice of wo invoke Apollo ?  
Ill do these notes of grief accord with him.

CAS. Wo, wo ! O Earth ! Apollo, O Apollo !

ÆSCH.—T

CHO. Again her inauspicious voice invokes  
The god, whose ears are not attuned to wo. 1140

CAS. Apollo, O Apollo, fatal leader,  
Yet once more, god, thou leadest me to ruin!

CHO. She seems prophetic of her own misfortunes,

Retaining, though a slave, the divine spirit.

CAS. Apollo, O Apollo, fatal leader, 1145  
Ah, whither hast thou led me? to what house?

CHO. Is that unknown? Let me declare it then:  
This is the royal mansion of the Atridæ.

CAS. It is a mansion hated by the gods,  
Conscious to many a foul and horrid deed; 1150  
A slaughter-house that reeks with human gore.

CHO. This stranger seems, like the nice-scented  
hound,

Quick in the trace of blood, which she will find.

CAS. These are convincing proofs. Look there,  
look there,

While pity drops a tear, the children butcher'd, 1155  
The father feasting on their roasted flesh!

CHO. Thy fame, prophetic virgin, we have heard;  
We know thy skill; but wish no prophets now.

CAS. Ye powers of heaven, what does she now  
design?

What new and dreadful deed of wo is this? 1160

What dreadful ill designs she in the house,

Intolerable, irreparable mischief,

While far she sends the succouring power away?

CHO. These prophecies surpass my apprehension;  
The first I knew, they echo through the city. 1165

CAS. Ah! daring wretch, dost thou achieve this  
deed,

Thus in the bath the partner of thy bed

Refreshing? How shall I relate the event?

Yet speedy shall it be. Ev'n now advanced

Hand above hand extended threatens high. 1170

CHO. I comprehend her not; her words are dark,  
Perplexing me like abstruse oracles.

CAS. Ha! What is this that I see here before me?  
Is it the net of hell? Or rather hers,  
Who shares the bed, and plans the murderous deed?  
Let discord, whose insatiable rage 1176  
Pursues this race, howl through the royal rooms  
Against the victim destined to destruction.

CHO. What fury dost thou call within this house  
To hold her orgies? The dread invocation 1180  
Appals me; to my heart the purple drops  
Flow back; a death-like mist covers my eyes,  
With expectation of some sudden ruin.

CAS. See, see there; from the heifer keep the  
bull!— 1184  
O'er his black brows she throws the entangling vest,  
And smites him with her huge two-handed engine.  
He falls, amid the cleansing laver falls;  
I tell thee of the bath, the treach'rous bath.

CHO. To unfold the obscure oracles of Heaven  
Is not my boast; beneath the shadowing veil 1190  
Misfortune lies. When did the inquirer learn  
From the dark sentence an event of joy?  
From time's first records the diviner's voice  
Gives the sad heart a sense of misery. 1194

CAS. Ah me unhappy! Wretched, wretched fate!  
For my own sufferings join'd call forth these wail-  
ings.

Why hast thou brought me hither? Wretched me?  
Is it for this, that I may die with him?

CHO. This is the phrensy of a mind possess'd 1199  
With wildest ravings. Thy own woes thou wailest  
In mournful melody, like the sweet bird,  
That darkling pours her never-ceasing plaint;  
And for her Itys, her lost Itys, wastes  
In sweetest wo her melancholy life.

CAS. Ah me! the fortune of the nightingale 1205  
Is to be envied: on her light-poised plumes  
She wings at will her easy way, nor knows  
The anguish of a tear; while o'er my head  
The impending sword threatens the fatal wound.

CHO. Whence is this violent, this wild presage  
Of ill? Thy fears are vain: yet with a voice 1211  
That terrifies, though sweet, aloud thou speakest  
Thy sorrows. Whence hast thou derived these  
omens,

Thus deeply mark'd with characters of death?

CAS. Alas, the bed, the bridal bed of Paris, 1215  
Destructive to his friends! Paternal stream,  
Scamander, on thy banks with careless steps  
My childhood stray'd; but now methinks I go,  
Alas, how soon! to prophesy around  
Cocytus, and the banks of Acheron! 1220

CHO. Perspicuous this, and clear! the new-born  
babe

Might comprehend it; but thy piercing griefs,  
Bewailing thus the miseries of thy fate,  
Strike deep; they wound me to my very soul.

CAS. Ah my poor country, my poor bleeding coun-  
try, 1225

Fall'n, fall'n for ever! And you, sacred altars,  
That blazed before my father's tower'd palace,  
Not all your victims could avert your doom!  
And on the earth soon shall my warm blood flow.

CHO. This is consistent with thy former ravings.  
Or does some god indeed incumbent press 1231  
Thy soul, and modulate thy voice to utter  
These lamentable notes of wo and death?  
What the event shall be exceeds my knowledge.

CAS. The oracle no more shall shroud its visage  
Beneath a veil, as a new bride that blushes 1236  
To meet the gazing eye; but like the sun,  
When with his orient ray he gilds the east,  
Shall burst upon you in a flood of light,  
Disclosing deeds of deeper dread. Away, 1240  
Ye mystic coverings! And you, reverend men,  
Bear witness to me, that with steady step  
I trace foul deeds that smell above the earth:  
For never shall that band, whose yelling notes

In dismal accord pierce the affrighted ear, 1245  
 Forsake this house. The genius of the feast,  
 Drunk with the blood of men, and fired from thence  
 To bolder daring, ranges through the rooms  
 Link'd with his kindred Furies; these possess  
 The mansion, and in horrid measures chant 1250  
 The first base deed; recording with abhorrence  
 The adulterous lust that stain'd a brother's bed.  
 What, like a skilful archer, have I lodged  
 My arrow in the mark? No trifling this,  
 To alarm you with false sounds. But swear to me,  
 In solemn attestation, that I know, 1256  
 And speak the old offences of this house.

CHO. In such a rooted ill what healing power  
 Resides there in an oath? But much I marvel  
 That thou, the native of a foreign realm, 1260  
 Of foreign tongue, canst speak our language freely,  
 As Greece had been thy constant residence.

CAS. Apollo graced me with this skill. At first  
 The curb of modesty was on my tongue.

CHO. Did the god feel the force of young desire?  
 In each gay breast ease fans the wanton flame. 1266

CAS. With all the fervour of impatient love  
 He strove to gratify my utmost wish.

CHO. And didst thou listen to his tempting lures?

CAS. First I assented, then deceived the god. 1270

CHO. Wast thou then fraught with these prophetic  
 arts?

CAS. Ev'n then I told my country all its woes.

CHO. The anger of the god fell heavy on thee?

CAS. My voice, for this offence, lost all persua-  
 sion.

CHO. To us it seems a voice of truth divine. 1275

CAS. Wo, wo is me! Again the furious power  
 Swells in my lab'ring breast; again commands  
 My bursting voice; and what I speak is fate.  
 Look, look, behold those children. There they sit;  
 Such are the forms, that in the troubled night 1280  
 Distract our sleep.—By a friend's hands they died:

Are these the ties of blood !—See, in their hands  
 Their mangled limbs, horrid repast, they bear :  
 The invited father shares the accursed feast.

For this the sluggard savage that at ease 1285  
 Rolls on his bed, nor rouses from his lair,

'Gainst my returning lord, for I must wear  
 The yoke of slavery, plans the dark design  
 Of death. Ah me ! the chieftain of the fleet,  
 The vanquisher of Troy, but little knows 1290

What the smooth tongue of mischief, filed to words  
 Of glozing courtesy, with Fate her friend,  
 Like Ate ranging in the dark, can do

Calmly : such deeds a woman dares : she dares  
 Murder a man. What shall I call this mischief ?

An Amphisbæna ? or a Scylla rather, 1296

That in the vex'd rocks holds her residence,  
 And meditates the mariner's destruction ?

Mother of hell, mid friends enkindling discord  
 And hate implacable ! With dreadful daring 1300

How did she shout, as if the battle swerved ?  
 Yet with feign'd joy she welcomes his return.

These words may want persuasion. What of that ?

What must come will come : and ere long with grief  
 Thou shalt confess my prophecies are true. 1305

CHO. Thyestes' bloody feast oft have I heard of,  
 Always with horror ; and I tremble now  
 Hearing the unaggravated truth. What else  
 She utters leads my wand'ring thoughts astray  
 In wild uncertainty.

CAS. Then mark me well, 1310  
 Thou shalt behold the death of Agamemnon.

CHO. To better omens tune that voice unblest'd,  
 Or in eternal silence be it sunk.

CAS. This is an ill no medicine can heal.

CHO. Not if it happens : but avert it, Heaven ! 1315

CAS. To pray be thine ; the murd'rous deed is  
 theirs.

CHO. What man dares perpetrate this dreadful  
 act !

CAS. How widely dost thou wander from my words!

CHO. I heard not whose bold hand should do the deed.

CAS. Yet speak I well the language of your Greece. 1320

CHO. The gift of Phœbus this; no trivial grace.

CAS. Ah, what a sudden flame comes rushing on me!

I burn, I burn. Apollo, O Apollo!

This lioness, that in a sensual sty

Roll'd with the wolf, the generous lion absent, 1325

Will kill me; and the sorceress, as she brews

Her filter'd cup, will drug it with my blood.

She glories, as against her husband's life

She whets the axe, her vengeance falls on him

For that he came accompanied by me. 1330

Why do I longer wear these useless honours,

This laurel wand, and these prophetic wreaths?

Away! before I die I cast you from me.

Lie there and perish; I am rid of you;

Or deck the splendid ruin of some other. 1335

Apollo rends from me these sacred vestments,

Who saw me in his rich habiliments

Mock'd mid my friends, doubtless without a cause,

When in opprobrious terms they jeer'd my skill,

And treated me as a poor vagrant wretch, 1340

That told events from door to door for bread,

I bore it all: but now the prophet god,

That with his own arts graced me, sinks me down

To this low ruin. As my father fell

Butcher'd ev'n at the altar, like the victim's 1345

My warm blood at the altar shall be shed:

Nor shall we die unhonour'd by the gods.

He comes, dreadful in punishment, the son

Of this bad mother, by her death to avenge

His murder'd father: distant though he roams, 1350

An outcast and an exile, by his friends

Fenced from these deeds of violence, he comes



In solemn vengeance for his father laid  
 Thus low.—But why for foreign miseries  
 Does the tear darken in my eye, that saw 1355  
 The fall of Ilium, and its haughty conq'rors  
 In righteous judgment thus receive their meed?  
 But forward now; I go to close the scene,  
 Nor shrink from death. I have a vow in heaven.  
 And farther I adjure these gates of hell, 1360  
 Well may the blow be aim'd, that while my blood  
 Flows in a copious stream, I may not feel  
 The fierce, convulsive agonies of death;  
 But gently sink, and close my eyes in peace.

CHO. Unhappy, in thy knowledge most unhappy,  
 Long have thy sorrows flow'd. But if indeed 1366  
 Thou dost foresee thy death, why, like the heifer  
 Led by a heavenly impulse, do thy steps  
 Advance thus boldly to the cruel altar?

CAS. I could not by delay escape my fate. 1370

CHO. Yet is there some advantage in delay.

CAS. The day is come: by flight I should gain  
 little.

CHO. Thy boldness adds to thy unhappiness.

CAS. None of the happy shuns his destined end.

CHO. True; but to die with glory crowns our  
 praise. 1375

CAS. So died my father, so his noble sons.

CHO. What may this mean? Why backward dost  
 thou start?

Do thy own thoughts with horror strike thy soul?

CAS. The scent of blood and death breathes from  
 this house. 1379

CHO. The victims now are bleeding at the altar.

CAS. 'Tis such a smell as issues from the tomb.

CHO. This is no Syrian odour in the house.

CAS. Such though it be, I enter, to bewail  
 My fate, and Agamemnon's. To have lived, 1384  
 Let it suffice. And think not, gen'rous strangers,  
 Like the poor bird that flutters o'er the bough,  
 Through fear I linger: but my dying words

You will remember, when her blood shall flow  
For mine, woman's for woman's; and the man's,  
For his that falls by his accursed wife. 1390

CHO. Thy fate, poor sufferer, fills my eyes with  
tears.

CAS. Yet once more let me raise my mournful  
voice.

Thou Sun, whose rising beams shall bless no more  
These closing eyes! You, whose vindictive rage  
Hangs o'er my hated murderers, O, avenge me;  
Though a poor slave, I fall an easy prey! 1396  
This is the state of man: in prosperous fortune  
A shadow, passing light, throws to the ground  
Joy's baseless fabric; in adversity  
Comes malice with a sponge moisten'd in gall, 1400  
And wipes each beauteous character away:  
More than the first this melts my soul to pity.

CHORUS.

By nature man is form'd with boundless wishes  
For prosperous fortune; and the great man's door  
Stands ever open to that envied person 1405  
On whom she smiles: but enter not with words  
Like this, poor sufferer, of such dreadful import.  
His arms the powers of heaven have graced with  
conquest;

Troy's proud walls lie in dust; and he returns  
Crown'd by the gods with glory: but if now 1410  
His blood must for the blood there shed atone,  
If he must die for those that died, too dearly  
He buys his triumph. Who of mortal men  
Hears this, and dares to think his state secure?

AGA. O, I am wounded with a deadly blow. [*within.*]

SEMI. List! list! What cry is this of wounds and  
death? 1416

AGA. Wounded again: O, basely, basely murder'd.

SEMICO. I. 'Tis the king's cry; the dreadful deed  
is doing.

What shall we do? what measures shall we form?

S

SEMICHO. II. What if we spread the alarm, and  
with our outcries 1420  
Call at the palace gates the citizens ?

SEMICHO. I. Nay, rather rush we in, and prove the  
deed,  
While the fresh blood is reeking on the sword.

SEMICHO. II. I readily concur : determine then ;  
For something must be done, and instantly. 1425

SEMICHO. I. That's evident. This bloody prelude  
threatens  
More deeds of violence and tyranny.

SEMICHO. II. We linger : those that tread the paths  
of Honour,  
Late though she meets them, sleep not in their task.

SEMICHO. I. Perplexity and doubt distract my  
thoughts : 1430  
Deeds of high import ask maturest counsel.

SEMICHO. II. Such are my thoughts, since fruitless  
were the attempt  
By all our pleas to raise the dead to life.

SEMICHO. I. To save our wretched lives then shall  
we bow 1434  
To these imperious lords, these stains of honour ?

SEMICHO. II. That were a shame indeed. No : let  
us die ;  
Death is more welcome than such tyranny.

SEMICHO. I. Shall we then take these outcries,  
which we heard,  
For proofs, and thence conclude the king is slain ?

SEMICHO. II. We should be well assured ere we  
pronounce : 1440  
To know, and to conjecture, differ widely.

SEMICHO. I. There's reason in thy words. Best  
enter then,  
And see what fate attends the son of Atreus.

CLYTEMNESTRA, CHORUS.

CLY. To many a fair speech suited to the times  
If my words now be found at variance, 1445

I shall not blush : for when the heart conceives  
Thoughts of deep vengeance on a foe, what means  
To achieve the deed more certain, than to wear  
The form of friendship, and with circling wiles  
Enclose him in the insuperable net ? 1450

This was no hasty, rash-conceived design ;  
But form'd with deep, premeditated thought,  
Incensed with wrongs ; and often have I stood,  
To assay the execution, where he fell ;  
And plann'd it so, for I with pride avow it, 1455

He had no power to escape, or to resist,  
Entangled in the gorgeous robe, that shone  
Fatally rich. I struck him twice, and twice  
He groan'd, then died. A third time, as he lay,  
I gored him with a wound ; a grateful present 1460

To the stern god, that in the realms below  
Reigns o'er the dead : there let him take his seat.  
He lay ; and spouting from his wounds a stream  
Of blood, bedew'd me with these crimson drops.  
I glory in them, like the genial earth, 1465  
When the warm showers of heaven descend, and  
wake

The flow'rets to unfold their vermeil leaves :  
Come then, ye reverend senators of Argos,  
Joy with me, if your hearts be tuned to joy ;  
And such I wish them. Were it decent now 1470  
To pour libations o'er the dead, with justice  
It might be done ; for his injurious pride  
Fill'd for this house the cup of desolation,  
Fated himself to drain it to the dregs.

CHO. We are astonish'd at thy daring words, 1475  
Thus vaunting o'er the ruins of thy husband.

CLY. Me, like a witless woman, wouldst thou  
fright ?

I tell thee, my firm soul disdains to fear.  
Be thou disposed to applaud or censure me,  
I reckon it not : there Agamemnon lies, 1480  
My husband, slaughter'd by this hand : I dare  
Avow his death, and justify the deed.

CHO. What poison hath the baleful-teeming earth,  
 Or the chafed billows of the foamy sea,  
 Given thee for food, or mingled in thy cup, 1485  
 To work thee to this phrensy? Thy cursed hand  
 Hath struck, hath slain. For this thy country's  
 wrath

Shall in just vengeance burst upon thy head,  
 And with abhorrence drive thee from the city. 1489

CLY. And dost thou now denounce upon my head  
 Vengeance, and hate, and exile? 'gainst this man  
 Urging no charge? Yet he without remorse,  
 As if a lamb that wanton'd in his pastures  
 Were doom'd to bleed, could sacrifice his daughter  
 (For whose dear sake I felt a mother's pains), 1495  
 To appease the winds of Thrace. Should not thy  
 voice

Adjudge this man to exile, in just vengeance  
 For such unholy deeds? Scarce hast thou heard  
 What I have done, but sentence is pronounced,  
 And that with rigour too. But mark me well; 1500  
 I boldly tell thee that I bear a soul  
 Prepared for either fortune: if thy hand  
 Be stronger, use thy power; but if the gods  
 Prosper my cause, be thou assured, old man,  
 Thou shalt be taught a lesson of discretion. 1505

CHO. Aspiring are thy thoughts, and thy proud  
 vaunts  
 Swell with disdain; ev'n yet thy madding mind  
 Is drunk with slaughter; with a savage grace  
 The thick blood stains thine eye. But soon thy  
 friends 1509

Faithless shall shrink from thy unshelter'd side,  
 And leave thee to just vengeance, blow for blow.

CLY. Hear then this solemn oath. By that re-  
 venge

Which for my daughter I have greatly taken;  
 By the dread powers of Ate and Erinnyes,  
 To whom my hand devoted him a victim; 1515  
 Without a thought of fear I range these rooms,

While present to my aid Ægisthus stands,  
 As he hath stood, guarding my social hearth :  
 He is my shield, my strength, my confidence.  
 Here lies my base betrayer, who at Troy 1520  
 Could revel in the arms of each Chryseis ;  
 He, and his captive minion ; she that mark'd  
 Portents and prodigies, and with ominous tongue  
 Presaged the Fates ; a wanton harlotry,  
 True to the rower's benches : their just meed 1525  
 Have they received. See where he lies ; and she,  
 That like the swan warbled her dying notes,  
 His paranymp lies with him, to my bed  
 Leaving the darling object of my wishes.

CHO. No slow-consuming pains, to torture us  
 Fix'd to the groaning couch, await us now ; 1531  
 But Fate comes rushing on, and brings the sleep  
 That wakes no more. There lies the king, whose  
 virtues

Were truly royal. In a woman's cause  
 He suffer'd much ; and by a woman perish'd. 1535  
 Ah fatal Helen ! in the fields of Troy  
 How many has thy guilt, thy guilt alone,  
 Stretch'd in the dust ! But now by murd'rous hands  
 Hast thou sluiced out this rich and noble blood,  
 Whose foul stains never can be purged. This ruin  
 Hath Discord, raging in the house, effected. 1541

CLY. Wish not for death ; nor bow beneath thy  
 griefs ;  
 Nor turn thy rage on Helen, as if she  
 Had drench'd the fields with blood : as she alone,  
 Fatal to Greece, had caused these dreadful ills.

CHO. Tremendous fiend, that breathest through  
 this house 1546  
 Thy baleful spirit, and with equal daring  
 Hast steel'd these royal sisters to fierce deeds  
 That rend my soul ; now, like the baleful raven.

1548 Clytemnestra and Helen.

ÆSCH.—U

Incumbent o'er the body, dost thou joy 1550  
To affright us with thy harsh and dissonant notes ?

CLY. There's sense in this : now hast thou touch'd  
the key,

Rousing the Fury that from sire to son  
Hath bid the stream of blood, first pour'd by her,  
Descend : one sanguine tide scarce rolled away,  
Another flows in terrible succession. 1556

CHO. And dost thou glory in these deeds of death,  
This vengeance of the Fury ? Thus to pride thee  
In ruin, and the havoc of thy house,  
Becomes thee ill. Ah ! 'tis a higher power 1560  
That thus ordains ; we see the hand of Jove,  
Whose will directs the fate of mortal man,  
My king, my royal lord, what words can show  
My grief, my reverence for thy princely virtues ?  
Art thou thus fall'n, caught in a cobweb snare, 1565  
By impious murder breathing out thy life ?  
Art thou thus fall'n, (ah, the disloyal bed !)  
Secretly slaughter'd by a treach'rous hand ?

CLY. Thou say'st, and say'st aloud, I did this deed :  
Say not that I, that Agamemnon's wife, 1570  
Did it : the Fury, fatal to this house,  
In vengeance for Thyestes' horrid feast,  
Assumed this form, and with her ancient rage  
Hath for the children sacrificed the man.

CHO. That thou art guiltless of this blood, what  
proof, 1575  
What witness ?—From the father, in his cause,  
Rise an avenger ! Stain'd with the dark streams  
Of kindred blood fierce waves the bick'ring sword,  
And points the ruthless boy to deeds of horror.—  
My king, my royal lord, what words can show 1580  
My grief, my reverence for thy princely virtues ?  
Art thou thus fall'n, caught in a cobweb snare,  
By impious murder breathing out thy life ?  
Art thou thus fall'n, (ah, the disloyal bed !)  
Secretly slaughter'd by a treach'rous hand ? 1585

CLY. No : of his death far otherwise I deem,

Nothing disloyal. Nor with secret guile  
Wrought he his murd'rous mischiefs on this house.  
For my sweet flow'ret, opening from his stem,  
My Iphigenia, my lamented child, 1590  
Whom he unjustly slew, he justly died.  
Nor let him glory in the shades below ;  
For as he taught his sword to thirst for blood,  
So by the thirsty sword his blood was shed.

CHO. Perplex'd and troubled in my anxious thought,  
Amid the ruins of this house, despair 1596  
Hangs heavy on me. Drop by drop no more  
Descends the shower of blood ; but the wild storm  
In one red torrent shakes the solid walls ;  
While Vengeance, ranging through the dreadful  
scene, 1600  
For further mischief whets her fatal sword.

SEMI. O Earth, that I had rested in thy bosom,  
Ere I had seen him lodged with thee, and shrunk  
To the brief compass of a silver urn !  
Who shall attend the rites of sepulture ? 1605  
Who shall lament him ? Thou, whose hand has shed  
Thy husband's blood, wilt thou dare raise the voice  
Of mourning o'er him ? Thy unhallow'd hand  
Renders these honours, should they come from thee,  
Unwelcome to his shade. What faithful tongue,  
Fond to recount his great and godlike acts, 1611  
Shall steep in tears his funeral eulogy ?

CLY. This care concerns not thee : by us he fell,  
By us he died ; and we will bury him  
With no domestic grief. But Iphigenia, 1615  
His daughter, as is meet, jocund and blithe,  
Shall meet him on the banks of that sad stream,  
The flood of sorrow, and with filial duty  
Hang fondling on her father's neck, and kiss him.

CHO. Thus insult treads on insult. Of these things  
Hard is it to decide. The infected stain 1621  
Communicates the infection ; murder calls  
For blood ; and outrage on the injurious head,  
At Jove's appointed time, draws outrage down.



Thus, by the laws of nature, son succeeds 1625  
To sire ; and who shall drive him from the house ?

CLY. These are the oracles of truth. But hear me.  
It likes me to the genius of the race  
Of Plisthenes, to swear that what is pass'd,  
Though poor the satisfaction, bounds my wishes.  
Hither he comes no more : no, let him stain 1631  
Some other house with gore. For me, some poor,  
Some scanty pittance of the goods contents me,  
Well satisfied that from this house I've driven  
These frantic Furies red with kindred blood. 1635

ÆGISTHUS, CLYTEMNESTRA, CHORUS.

ÆGIS. Hail to this joyful day, whose welcome  
light  
Brings vengeance ! Now I know that the just gods  
Look from their skies, and punish impious mortals,  
Seeing this man roll'd in the blood-wove woof,  
The tissue of the Furies, grateful sight, 1640  
And suffering for his father's fraudulent crimes.  
Atreus, his father, sovereign of this land,  
Brooking no rival in his power, drove out  
My father and his brother, poor Thyestes,  
A wretched exile : from his country far 1645  
He wander'd : but at length return'd, and stood  
A suppliant before the household gods,  
Secure in their protection that his blood  
Should not distain the pavement. This man's father,  
The sacrilegious Atreus, with more show 1650  
Of courtesy than friendship, spread the feast,  
Devoting, such the fair pretence, the day  
To hospitality and genial mirth :  
Then to my father in that feast served up  
The flesh of his own sons : their hands and feet  
Hack'd off before, their undistinguish'd parts 1656  
He ate, without suspicion ate, a food  
Destructive to the race ; but when he knew  
The unhallow'd deed, he raised a mournful cry  
And, starting up with horror, spurn'd to the ground

The barb'rous banquet, utt'ring many a curse 1661  
Of deepest vengeance on the house of Pelops.

Thus perish all the race of Plisthenes !

And for this cause thou seest him fall'n ; his death  
With justice I devised ; for me he chased, 1665

The thirteenth son, an infant in my cradle,  
With my unhappy father. Nursed abroad,  
Vengeance led back my steps, and taught my hand  
From far to reach him. All this plan of ruin 1669  
Was mine, reckless of what ensues ; ev'n death  
Were glorious, now he lies caught in my vengeance.

CHO. To imbitter ills with insult, this, Ægisthus,  
I praise not. Thou, of thine own free accord,  
Hast slain this man ; such is thy boast ; this plan  
Of ruin, which we mourn, is thine alone. 1675

But be thou well assured thou shalt not 'scape  
When roused to justice, the avenging people  
Shall hurl their stones with curses on thy head.

ÆGIS. From thee, who labourest at the lowest oar  
This language, and to him that holds the helm ! 1680  
Thou shalt be taught, old man, what at thy age  
Is a hard lesson, prudence. Chains and hunger,  
Besides the load of age, have sovereign virtue  
To physic the proud heart. Behold this sight ;  
Does it not ope thine eyes ? Rest quiet then ; 1685  
Contend not with the strong ; there's danger in it.

CHO. And could thy softer sex, while the rough war  
Demands its chieftain, violate his bed,  
And on his first return contrive his death ?

ÆGIS. No more : this sounds the alarm to rude  
complaints. 1690

The voice of Orpheus with its soothing notes  
Attracted even the savage ; while thy yells  
To rage inflame the gentle : but take heed ;  
Dungeons and chains may teach thee moderation.

CHO. Shalt thou reign king in Argos ? Thou  
whose soul 1695  
Plotted this murder ; while thy coward hand  
Shrunk back, nor dared to execute the deed ?

**ÆGIS.** Wiles and deceit are female qualities:  
 The memory of my ancient enmity  
 Had waked suspicion. Master of his treasures, 1700  
 Be it my next attempt to gain the people:  
 Whome'er I find unwilling to submit,  
 Him, like a high-fed and unruly horse  
 Reluctant to the harness, rigour soon  
 Shall tame; confinement, and her meager comrade,  
 Keen hunger, will abate his fiery mettle. 1706

**СНО.** Did not the baseness of thy coward soul  
 Unman thee to this murder, that a woman;  
 Shame to her country and her country's gods,  
 Must dare the horrid deed? But when Orestes, 1710  
 Where'er he breathes the vital air, returns,  
 (Good fortune be his guide)! shall not his hand  
 Take a bold vengeance in the death of both?

**ÆGIS.** Such since thy thoughts and words, soon  
 shalt thou feel—

**СНО.** Help, ho! soldiers and friends; the danger's  
 near; 1715  
 Help, ho! advance in haste with your drawn swords!

**ÆGIS.** My sword is drawn; Ægisthus dares to die.

**СНО.** Prophetic be thy words! we hail the omen.

**СЛЫ.** Dearest of men, do not heap ills on ills:  
 I wish not to exasperate, but to heal 1720  
 Misfortunes pass'd; enough is given to vengeance;  
 Let no more blood be spilt. Go then, old men,  
 Each to your homes; go, while ye may, in peace.  
 What hath been done the rigour of the times  
 Compell'd, and hard necessity; the weight 1725  
 Of these afflictions, grievous as they are,  
 By too severe a doom falls on our heads.  
 Disdain not to be taught, though by a woman.

**ÆGIS.** Ay; but to hear this vain, tongue-doughty  
 babbler,  
 Lavish of speech that tempts to desperate deeds, 1730  
 It moves me from the firmness of my temper.

**СНО.** An Argive scorns to fawn on guilty great-  
 ness.

**ÆGIS.** My vengeance shall o'ertake thee at the last.

**CHO.** Not if just Heaven shall guide Orestes hither.

**ÆGIS.** An exile, I well know, feeds on vain hopes.

**CHO.** Go on then, gorge with blood; thou hast the means. 1736

**ÆGIS.** This folly, be assured, shall cost thee dear.

**CHO.** The craven, in her presence, rears his crest.

**CLY.** Slight men, regard them not; but let us enter,

Assume our state, and order all things well. 1740



# THE CHOEPHORÆ

**DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.**

**ORESTES,**

**PYLADES,**

**ELECTRA,**

**CLYTEMNESTRA,**

**ÆGISTHUS,**

**GILISSA,**

**SERVANTS,**

**CHORUS of Trojan Dames.**

# THE CHOEPHORÆ.

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## ARGUMENT.

ON receiving the intelligence of his father's murder, Orestes quits the protection of the Phocian court in company with his friend Pylades, and arrives in disguise at Mycenæ, where he discovers himself to his sister Electra, who cordially co-operates with his design—Feigning himself commissioned to communicate to Clytemnestra the untimely fate of her son, he obtains admission into his paternal palace, where he slays his mother and her guilty paramour: but the unfortunate youth has no sooner perpetrated his meditated vengeance at the instigation of Apollo, than he is tormented by the Furies as a punishment for his parricide.

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### ORESTES; PYLADES.

ORES. O THOU, that to the regions of the dead  
Bearest thy father's high behests, O hear,  
Hear, Mercury, thy suppliant, protect,  
And save me; for I come, from exile come,  
Revisiting my country!—Thou, dread shade, 5  
At whose high tomb I bow, shade of my father,  
Hear me, O hear! To thee these crisped locks,  
Once sacred to the nurture-giving stream  
Of Inachus, in the anguish of my soul  
I now devote. But what are these, this train 10  
Of females in the sable garb of wo  
Decently habited? Whence spring their sorrows?  
Does some new ruin lord it in the house?  
Or haply, if I deem aright, they bring  
Oblations to my father's shade, to sooth 15  
The mighty dead. It must be so; for see,

1 The beginning of this play is lost.



Electra is among them, my poor sister,  
 Pre-eminent in grief.—Almighty Jove,  
 O give me to revenge my father's death,  
 And shield me with thy favour! Pylades, 20  
 Stand we apart conceal'd, that I may learn  
 What leads this train of suppliant females hither.

## ELECTRA, CHORUS.

## CHORUS.

## STROPHE I.

This sadly-pensive train to lead,  
 With hallow'd rites to sooth the dead,  
 To bear these off'rings to his shrine, 25  
 The melancholy task is mine!  
 And, as from yon proud walls I take my way,  
 My cheeks, with many a sounding blow  
 Beat by these hands, in crimson glow,  
 While my poor heart to anguish sinks a prey: 30  
 And the fair texture of this vest,  
 That decent o'er my swelling bosom roll'd,  
 My griefs through ev'ry waving fold  
 Have rent, and bared my bleeding breast.

## ANTISTROPHE I.

For in the still and midnight hour, 35  
 When darkness aids his hideous power,  
 Affright, that breathes his vengeance deep,  
 Haunts with wild dreams the troubled sleep,  
 That freeze the blood, and raise the bristling hair;  
 Grim spectre! he with horrid tread 40  
 Stalk'd around the curtain'd bed,  
 And raised a yell that pierced the tortured ear.  
 Aghast the heaven-taught prophet stood;  
 "The dead," he cries, "the angry dead around  
 These dreadful notes of vengeance sound, 45  
 Dreadful to those that shed their blood."

## STROPHE II.

With soul-subduing fear appall'd,  
 Me this unholy woman call'd,  
 To bear these gifts, this train to lead,  
 And sooth to peace the mighty dead. 50

But will these gifts be grateful to his shade ?  
 O Earth, when once the gushing blood  
 Hath on thy purple bosom flow'd,  
 What grateful expiation shall be made ?  
 Ill-fated house, thy master slain, 55  
 How are thy glories vanish'd ! O'er thy walls  
 A joyless, sunless darkness falls,  
 And Horror holds his hateful reign.

## ANTISTROPHE II.

Round him the blaze of greatness shone,  
 And dignity adorn'd his throne : 60  
 The people bowed before their lord,  
 Awe-struck, and his high state adored.  
 Where now that reverend awe, that sacred dread  
 Of majesty ! Success, to thee  
 As to a god, men bend the knee. 65  
 But justice hastes to avenge each impious deed ;  
 Some in day's clear and open light,  
 Some in the dusky evening's twilight shade ;  
 Or by delay more furious made,  
 Some in the dreary gloom of night. 70

## EPODE.

His blood, that sunk upon the ground  
 A stiffen'd mass of carnage lies,  
 Aloud for vengeance on his murderers cries :  
 Ate obeys the call ; but slow  
 Delays, till dreary night enclose them round, 75  
 Prepared to strike a deeper blow.  
 Shall he, that foul with midnight rape  
 Pollutes the nuptial bed, escape ?  
 Murder and lust ! Were all the streams, that wind  
 Their mazy progress to the main, 80  
 To cleanse this odious stain in one combined,  
 The streams combined would flow in vain.  
 Me, from my bleeding country torn,  
 Condemn'd the servile yoke to bear,  
 Bitter constraint and spirit-sinking fear 85  
 Compel to obey their proud commands ;

T

Just or unjust, perforce they must be borne ;  
 Captive, my life is in their hands :  
 Perforce my struggling soul conceals its hate ;  
 My vest forbids the starting tear to flow ; 90  
 Mourning the mighty chief's unhappy fate,  
 Silent I stand, and stiffen with my wo.

ELC. Ye captive females, to whose care this  
 house  
 Owes what it has of order, since with me  
 You here are present on these suppliant rites 95  
 Attendant, show, instruct me, as I pour  
 These solemn off'rings on the tomb, what words  
 Of gracious potency shall I pronounce ?  
 Or how invoke my father ? Shall I say  
 "To her loved lord the loving wife hath sent 100  
 These presents ?" Shame forbids: nor hath my  
 tongue  
 Aught of address, while on my father's tomb  
 I offer these atonements. Should I rather,  
 As nature prompts, entreat him to return,  
 Like garlands to the senders, meet reward 105  
 For their ill deeds ? or with inglorious silence  
 (For so he perish'd) on the thirsty earth  
 Pour these libations, then retire, like one  
 That in some worthless vessel throws away  
 Something unclean, and casts the vessel with it, 110  
 Nor backwards turns her eyes ? Instruct me,  
 friends,  
 Advise me, for alike we hate this house ;  
 Be open then ; here you have none to fear.  
 The free escapes not fate, more than the wretch  
 That trembles at his proud lord's tyrannous hand.  
 If thou hast aught of counsel, give it me. 116  
 CHO. Since, as some hallowed shrine, thy father's  
 tomb  
 I reverence, at thy bidding I will speak.  
 ELEC. I charge thee, by that reverence freely  
 speak.

CHO. With these libations pour thy ardent vows  
For blessings on the head of all his friends. 121

ELEC. Whom by that honour'd title shall I name?

CHO. Thyself the first, and all that hate Ægisthus.

ELEC. For thee and me then shall I pour these  
vows?

CHO. To learn, and weigh this well be thy concern. 125

ELEC. Whom to this friendly number shall I add?

CHO. Though distant far, remember poor Orestes.

ELEC. That's well: I learn no little wisdom from  
thee.

CHO. Remember next the authors of his death.

ELEC. What should I say? instruct my lack of  
knowledge. 130

CHO. Pray that some god, or man, may come to  
them.

ELEC. With what intent? To judge, or to avenge?

CHO. Speak plainly; to repay them death for  
death.

ELEC. And may this be with reverence to the  
gods?

CHO. What hinders to requite a foe with ill? 135

ELEC. [*at the tomb.*] O thou, that to the realms  
beneath the earth

Guidest the dead, be present, Mercury,  
And tell me that the powers, whose solemn sway  
Extends o'er those dark regions, hear my vows;  
Tell me that o'er my father's house they roll 140

Their awful eyes, and o'er this earth, that bears  
And fosters all, rich in their various fruits.

And thee, my father, pouring from this vase  
Libations to thy shade, on thee I call;

O pity me, pity my dear Orestes, 145

That in this seat of kings our hands may hold  
The golden reins of power: for now oppress'd,  
And harass'd by a mother's cruel hand

(Who for Ægisthus, that contrived thy death,  
Exchanged her royal lord), he wanders far, 150

And I am treated as a slave : Orestes  
 From his possessions exiled, they with pride  
 Wantonly revel in the wealth thy toils  
 Procured ; O grant Orestes may return,  
 And fortune be his guide ! Hear me, my father, 155  
 And grant me, more than e'er my mother knew,  
 The grace and blush of unstain'd modesty,  
 And a more holy hand ! For us these vows ;  
 But on our foes may thy avenger rise  
 Demanding blood for blood. These vows I breathe  
 In dreadful imprecations on their heads. 161  
 Be thou to us, my father, with the gods,  
 This earth, and powerful justice, be to us,  
 That breathe this vital air, a guide to good.  
 With these libations such the vows I offer. 165  
 Now let your sorrows flow ; attune the pæan,  
 And sooth his shade with solemn harmony.

## CHORUS.

Swell the warbling voice of wo,  
 Loudly let the measures flow ;  
 And ever and anon the sorrowing tear 170  
 Trickling dew the hallow'd ground  
 To avert the ills we fear ;  
 While on this sepulchral mound  
 Her pious hands the pure libation shed,  
 To atone the mighty dead. 175  
 Hear me, O hear me, awful lord,  
 Through the dreary gloom adored !  
 Ha ! who is this ! See, sisters, see,  
 Mark with what force he shakes his angry lance :  
 Comes he this ruin'd house to free ? 180  
 So does some Thracian chief advance ;  
 So Mars when roused with war's alarms,  
 Radiant all his clashing arms,  
 Rears high his flaming falchion to the blow,  
 And thunders on the foe. 185  
 ELÆO. 'Tis finish'd ; these libations to my father  
 The earth has drunk.—Thou awful power, that  
 holdest

"Twixt this ethereal sky and the dark realms  
Beneath dread intercourse, what may this mean ?

"Tis all amazement. Share this wonder with me. 190

CHO. Say what : my throbbing heart has caught  
the alarm.

ELEC. Placed on the tomb behold these crisped  
locks.

CHO. Shorn from a man, or some high-bosom'd  
dame ?

ELEC. 'Tis no hard task to form a strong conjecture. 194

CHO. Young though thou art, inform my riper age.

ELEC. None here, myself excepted, could devote  
His locks ; the mournful off'ring ill becomes  
Our enemies. Then the colour ; mark it well ;  
'Tis the same shade.

CHO. With whose ? I burn to know.

ELEC. With mine : compare them ; are they not  
much like ? 200

CHO. Are they a secret off'ring from Orestes ?

ELEC. Mark : they are very like his clust'ring  
locks.

CHO. I marvel how he dared to venture hither.

ELEC. Perchance he sent this honour to his father.

CHO. Nor that less cause of sorrow, if his foot 205  
Must never press his native soil again.

ELEC. A flood of grief o'erwhelms me, and my  
heart

Is pierced with anguish ; from my eyes, that view  
These locks, fast fall the ceaseless-streaming tears,  
Like wintry showers. To whom besides, that here  
Inhabits, could I think these locks belong ? 211

Could she who slew him offer on his tomb  
Her hair ? Alas, her thoughts are impious all,  
Such as a daughter dares not name. I deem,  
With reason then I deem, they graced the head 215  
Of my Orestes, dearest of mankind.

Why should not I indulge the flatt'ring hope ?

Ah ! had they but a voice, could they but speak,  
 That I no more might fluctuate, with these doubts  
 Perplex'd and troubled ; could they plainly tell me  
 If they were shorn from a foe's hated head, 221  
 Or fondly mix their kindred griefs with mine,  
 A grace and honour to my father's tomb !  
 But to the gods, that know what furious storms  
 Burst o'er me, like a shipwreck'd mariner, 225  
 I make appeal : if haply aught of safety  
 Remains, from this small root the vig'rous trunk  
 May spread its shelt'ring branches.—Further, mark  
 The impression of these feet ; they show that two  
 Trod here ; himself, perchance, and his attendant ;  
 One of the exact dimensions with my own. 231  
 But all is anguish and perplexity.

ORESTES, PYLADES, ELECTRA, CHORUS.

ORES. In other pressures beg the fav'ring gods  
 To hear thy vows, and shower their blessings on  
 thee.

ELEC. What blessing from them have I now ob-  
 tain'd ? 235

ORES. Thou seest before thee whom but late thine  
 eyes  
 Most wished to see.

ELEC. And dost thou know the name,  
 Which with fond joy my tongue delights to utter ?

ORES. Thy fervent vows, I know, are for Orestes.

ELEC. And of those vows what have I yet obtain'd ?

ORES. I am Orestes : seek no firmer friend. 241

ELEC. With wily trains thou wouldst ensnare me,  
 stranger.

ORES. Then should I spread these trains against  
 myself.

ELEC. But thou wouldst mock me in my miseries.

ORES. To mock thy miseries were to insult my  
 own. 245

ELEC. Am I indeed conversing with Orestes ?

ORES. Thou seest me present, yet art slow to know me.

When offer'd on the tomb thou saw'st these locks,  
 When with thy own the impressions of my feet  
 Were measured, joy gave wings to expectation, 250  
 And imaged me before thee. Mark these locks,  
 Shorn from thy brother's head; observe them well,  
 Compare them with thy own. This tissue, view it,  
 The texture is thy own, the rich embroidery;  
 Thine are these figures, by thy curious hand 255  
 Imaged in gold.—Let not thy joy transport thee:  
 Our nearest friends are now our deadliest foes.

ELEC. Thou dearest pledge of this imperial house,  
 From thee my hopes, water'd with tears, arose:  
 Thy valour shall support our righteous cause, 260  
 And vindicate the glories of thy father.  
 Pride of my soul! for my fond tongue must speak,  
 The love my father shared, my mother shared  
 (Once shared, but justly now my soul abhors her),  
 And that poor victim, my unhappy sister, 265  
 Is centred all in thee: thou art my father,  
 My mother, sister, my support, my glory,  
 My only aid: and heaven's great king shall prosper  
 Thy courage and the justice of thy cause.

ORES. Look down, great king of heaven, look  
 down, behold 270

These deeds of baseness; see an orphan race,  
 Reft of the parent eagle, that, inwreathed  
 In the dire serpent's spiry volumes, perish'd.  
 They, unprotected, feel the oppressive pangs  
 Of famine, yet too weak to wing their flight, 275  
 And, like their parent, fill their nest with prey.  
 We are the eagle's offspring, of our father  
 Deprived, and driven in exile from his house.  
 Before thy altars, loaded by his hand,  
 He bow'd with pious rev'rence: should thy will 280  
 Permit his young to perish, who shall pay thee  
 Like costly honours? Should the eagle's offspring



Be doom'd to perish, who shall bear thy thunders,  
 Dread sign of wrath awaked on mortal man ?  
 Nor will this empire, wither'd from its roots, 285  
 Adorn thy altars, on the solemn day .  
 With hallowed victims. Save us then, protect us,  
 To all its former glories raise this house,  
 Whose ruin'd towers seem bending to their fall.

CHO. Ye generous offspring of this royal house, 290  
 And guardians of its honour, check your transports ;  
 Lest they are heard, and some incontinent tongue  
 Bear them to our bad rulers : may these eyes  
 First see the dark wreaths of their funeral piles !

ORES. The voice of Phœbus never shall deceive :  
 In dreadful accents utter'd from his shrine 296  
 Aloud he charg'd me to defy the danger,  
 Threat'ning to rack my soul with keenest tortures,  
 Should I forbear to avenge my father's death  
 With equal retribution on his murderer, 300  
 That proudly riots in my wasted wealth.  
 This honour'd shade he charged me to avenge,  
 Though round enclosed with evils ; to the dead  
 This triumph o'er their foes the voice declared  
 A lenient joy ; to us denouncing ills, 305  
 Corrosive leprosies with rankling tooth  
 To gnaw our flesh, and taint our healthful bodies  
 With ulcerous foulness, changing these fresh locks  
 To untimely white ; with trains of heavier woes  
 Raised by the Furies from my father's blood, 310  
 Who in the realms of night sees this, and bends  
 His gloomy brows : for the dark shafts, that fly  
 From those beneath slain by the kindred hand . .  
 Of villain baseness, phrensy, and vain fear  
 That trembles at the shadows of the night, 315  
 Rouse, sting, and drive the vice-polluted wretch  
 With brazen scourges tortured through the city.  
 He from the friendly bowl, the hallow'd goblet,  
 The social intercourse, the incensed altar  
 Is chased, condemn'd to bear the secret pangs 320

Of inly-gnawing guilt : meanwhile the fiends,  
 Hatred and Infamy, pursue his steps,  
 And drag him to an execrable death.  
 Such was the voice of Phœbus, and demands  
 My prompt obedience. Could my soul refuse 325  
 To obey the awful mandate, yet the deed  
 Must be accomplish'd ; many urgencies  
 Conspire ; the charges of the gods, the grief  
 That wounds me for my father, the fierce pangs  
 Of penury compel me ; and the shame, 330  
 That burns the generous soul, to leave my country,  
 And all those heroes glorious through the world,  
 Whose conquering arms laid Troy's proud towers  
 in dust,

Slaves to two women ; for his soul is woman ;  
 If not, the occasion soon will prove his spirit. 335

CHO. And you, tremendous Destinies, whose power  
 Is ratified by Jove, mark the firm course  
 Of justice, and by that direct the event.  
 Be the insults of the hostile tongue repaid  
 With hostile insults : Justice calls aloud, 340  
 Demanding vengeance : let the murd'rous blow  
 Requite the murd'rous blow. The solemn voice,  
 Requiring that oppressive force should feel  
 Oppressive force, is sanctified by age.

ORES. O thou much injured shade, my suffering  
 father, 345

In thy dear cause what shall I say, what do,  
 Guided by fortune hither ! Where, O where  
 Is thy couch spread ! Our light is shaded o'er  
 With darkness deep as thine ; our youthful graces,  
 That in this royal house once bloom'd with hope 350  
 Fair opening, shrink at the rough blast of sorrow.

CHO No: the devouring flames, my son, that  
 waste  
 The body of the dead, touch not the soul ;  
 That lives, and knows its destined hour to show  
 Its wrath : yet for the dead our sorrows rise. 355  
 Meanwhile the oppressor stands a signal mark ;

U

And the just griefs of fathers and of sons  
With restless search trace all around for vengeance.

ELEC. Hear me too, O my father ; in those griefs  
Which at thy sepulchre thy children pour, 360  
I have a mournful part. Thy tomb receives  
Alike the suppliant and the exile. Which,  
Ah, which of these is well ? Which without evils ?  
No lenient hand can ease our miseries.

CHO. Yet may the god, that utter'd from the  
shrine 365

His awful voice, from these raise other sounds  
More pleasing ; and for these sepulchral notes,  
Notes steep'd in tears, through all these royal rooms  
The voice of joy may ring, and hail their lord  
Return'd to bless them with his kind protection. 370

ELEC. Yet, O my father, hadst thou greatly fallen  
Beneath the walls of Troy, pierced by the spear  
Of some bold Lycian, leaving to thy house  
Thy glory, gracing with illustrious splendour  
Thy children's steps, on that barbaric coast 375  
The high-raised tomb had dignified thy dust,  
And soothed our sorrows. In the realms beneath  
Thy friendly shade, among the friendly shades  
That fell with honour there, had held its state  
Majestic and revered, a king next those 380  
Whose awful power those darksome realms obey :  
For to thy last of life thou wast a king,  
The golden reins of empire graced thy hands,  
And thy strong sceptre ruled a willing people.  
But in the fields of Troy thou didst not fall, 385  
Nor is thy tomb beside Scamander's stream  
With those that perish'd by the hostile spear.  
But, O, I wish that they by whom he fell  
Had first so fall'n ; and he, though distant far,  
Had heard the rumour of their bloody fate, 390  
Secure himself, nor tangled in their snares.

CHO. Treasures of gold, my child, are poor to this .  
Thy words are greater than the greatest Fortune,  
And all her favours : from thy grief they spring.

But from this scourge a double clash is heard ; 395  
 One from the assistant powers beneath the earth ;  
 One from those lords, those hated lords that rule us,  
 Whose rude, unhallow'd hands are stain'd with blood ;  
 This sounds most dreadful to this royal race.

ELEC. This, like a piercing arrow, wounds my soul.

CHO. Supreme of gods, send from the realms of  
 night 401

The slow-avenging Ate ; bid her rise  
 To blast the fraudulent and audacious hands  
 Of impious mortals : for a father's wrongs  
 She stamps her vengeance deep. When on this man  
 The vengeful sword shall fall, and bleeding nigh 406  
 Lies this bad woman, be it mine to hear  
 Their shrieks of death, and answer to their cries  
 In notes as dismal. Why should I conceal  
 My honest hopes ? Fate spreads her sable wings, 410  
 And hovers o'er their heads ; before their eyes  
 Stands indignation arm'd, and hate enraged,  
 Ready to rend their hearts, when Jove shall stretch  
 His puissant hands. O thou, whose power subdues  
 The mighty, to this country seal thy faith, 415  
 And ratify their doom ! On the impious heads  
 I ask for vengeance. You whose dreaded power  
 The infernal realms revere, ye Furies, hear me !  
 There is a law that, for each drop of blood  
 Shed on the earth, demands that blood be shed ; 420  
 For from the slain Erinnyes calls for slaughter,  
 On ruin heaping ruin. Ye dread powers  
 Of hell's dark realms, where are you now ? Behold,  
 Ye potent curses of the slain, behold  
 The poor remains of this imperial house 425  
 Sunk in distress, and all its glories vanish'd !  
 Where, king of heaven, where may we seek for  
 refuge ?

ELEC. Again my throbbing heart sinks at the sound  
 Of thy laments ; and dark'ning o'er my soul  
 At thy sad voice come anguish and despair. 430  
 But when thy words breathe courage my sick griefs

Are fled, and fairer Fortune seems to smile.  
 But with what words to woo her? Speak aloud  
 The miseries which we suffer from our parents?  
 Or smooth our tongues to glozing courtesy? 435  
 That softens not our miseries: and our spirits,  
 Roused by the wrongs of our ungentle mother,  
 Contract a wolfish fierceness. With bold hand  
 She struck the stroke, bold as the Cissian dame  
 Train'd to the warrior's arms. She struck him once;  
 Again she struck him; her uplifted hands 441  
 Redoubled blow on blow; swift on his head  
 The distant-sounding strokes with steep force fell.  
 Bold, unrelenting woman, that could bear,  
 Without one pitying sigh, to entomb the king 445  
 Unhonour'd with his people's grief, the husband  
 Without a tear to grace his obsequies.

ORES. All thou hast mention'd are indignities  
 That swell my grief to rage. But vengeance arms  
 This hand, assisted by the gods, to punish 450  
 The ignominious wrongs done to my father.  
 May this revenge be mine, then let me die!

ELEC. When she had kill'd with barb'rous hands  
 she mangled  
 His manly figure, and with this abuse  
 Entomb'd him here, studious to make his murder 455  
 A deed of horror, that through all thy life  
 Might shock thy soul. Such was thy father's death,  
 Such were thy father's ignominious wrongs.  
 But me, a poor, deserted, worthless thing,  
 Spurn'd like a mischievous cur from my apartments,  
 They bid begone: there I could heave the sigh 461  
 In secret, there indulge the mournful pleasure  
 To pour the tear unnoticed and uncheck'd.  
 Hear this, and on thy mind imprint it deep,  
 Engrave it on the tablet of thy heart; 465  
 Be resolute, and calm. These things are thus:  
 Know this, and let thine indignation rise:  
 The time demands a firm, determined spirit.  
 And thou, my father, hear: on thee I call,

And with a friendly voice, though choked with  
tears.

Hear us, and aid ! 471

## CHORUS.

And with a friendly voice this social train  
To her sad voice accords the strain.  
Hear, mighty shade, and from the realms of  
night

Revisit this ethereal light ; 475

Against thy foes impart thy aid,  
Be war with war, and blood with blood repaid !  
Ye gods, with justice strike the blow !  
I tremble, as the measures flow !

But Fate attends, and hears our call, 480  
And, stern the bloody forfeit to demand,  
With fury arms the kindred hand,

And bids the righteous vengeance fall  
Here Sorrow holds her dismal state,  
Unsated Murder stains the ground, 485  
Revenge behind and Terror wait,  
And Desolation stalks his round ;

Not with a distant foe the war to wage,  
But on this house to pour their rage.  
These are the strains, that to the gods below, 490  
The avenging gods, in rude notes flow :  
Hear us, dread powers ; and this imperial race,  
Victorious in your night, with glory grace !

ORES. My royal father, who unroyally  
Wast murder'd, give me to command thy house ! 495

ELEC. Hear me, my father, for I want thy aid,  
Grant me to share his vengeance on Ægisthus,  
And then escape ; so may the solemn feast  
Be spread to thee ; else when the grateful odours  
Are wafted from the festive board, to grace 500  
The mighty dead, thy shade must want its honours.  
To thee this hand shall bring the costliest offerings,  
To thee shall consecrate whate'er of wealth  
Ought, from thy treasures, to adorn my nuptials ;  
And with the holiest reverence grace thy tomb. 505

ORES. Earth, send my father to behold the combat!

ELEC. Inspire him, Proserpine, with glorious force!

ORES. Think on the bath where thou wast murder'd, father!

ELEC. Think on the net in which they murder'd thee!

ORES. Toils, other than of brass, entangled thee. 510

ELEC. The inexplicable robe's accursed contrivance.

ORES. My father, cannot these dishonours raise thee?

ELEC. Dost thou not raise thy honour'd head! O send

Justice to aid thy friends: or if thy soul 514

Sinks with its wrongs, nor rises to revenge them,

Be the like sufferings ours! But, O my father,

Hear our last cries, and sitting on thy tomb

Behold thy children: pity my weak sex,

Pity his manly sorrow, nor extinguish

The illustrious line of Pelops: so in death 520

Thou dost not die; for children, when the tomb

Demands the parent, with surviving glory

Preserve his fame; the corks that buoy the line,

And save the net from sinking to the bottom.

O hear us; for thy sake we pour these plaints. 525

Thou shalt preserve thy glory, if with honour

Thou hear our words, our blameless words, that honour

The fortune of thy tomb, else unlamented!—

Now, brother, since thy soul is roused to dare

This deed, trust on the god, and do it straight. 530

ORES. I shall: but let me pause awhile to ask

Wherefore she sent these offerings, on what motive

Thus late she soothes the immedicable ill,

Paying this wretched honour to the dead 534

That cares not for it. What these presents mean

Surpasses my conjecture, but her crime

Outweighs their worth ; for all that can be offer'd  
 To atone for one man's blood is spent in vain.  
 Yet, if you know, explain her motives to me.

CHO. I know, for I was present : dreams and  
 visions, 540

The terrors of the night, appall'd her soul ;  
 Her guilty fears urged her to send these off'rings.

ORES. Told she the dreams that so alarm'd her  
 fears ?

CHO. She fancied she had given a dragon birth.

ORES. And what was the event ? Tell me in  
 brief. 545

CHO. This new-born dragon, like an infant child,  
 Laid in the cradle, seem'd in want of food ;  
 And in her dream she held it to her breast.

ORES. Without a wound 'scaped she the hideous  
 monster ?

CHO. The milk he drew was mix'd with clotted  
 blood. 550

ORES. 'Tis not for naught this vision from her hus-  
 band.

CHO. She cried out in her sleep with the affright ;  
 And many lamps, dim gleaming through the dark-  
 ness,

To do her pleasure, enter'd the apartment. 554  
 Soon to the tomb she sends these funeral honours,  
 Medicinal, as she hopes, to heal her ills.

ORES. But to this earth, and to my father's tomb  
 I make my supplications, that in me  
 Her dream may be accomplish'd ; and I judge  
 It aptly corresponds : for as this serpent, 560  
 Leaving the place that once was mine, and laid  
 Swathed like an infant, seized that breast which  
 nursed

My tender age, and mingled with the milk  
 Drew clotted blood ; and as with the affright  
 She call'd out in her sleep ; it cannot be, 565  
 But as she nursed this monster, she must die  
 A violent death ; and with a dragon's rage



This hand shall kill her, as her dream declares  
Or how wilt thou expound these prodigies ?

CHO. Thus may it be. But now instruct thy  
friends 570

What each must singly do, and each not do.

ORES. Few words suffice : then mark me : let her  
enter ;

And keep, I charge thee, keep my purpose secret ;  
That they, who slew an honourable man  
By cursed deceit, may by deceit be caught 575

In the same snare, and perish ; so the god,  
Powerful Apollo, from whose sacred voice  
Nothing but truth can flow, admonished me.

I, like a stranger, harness'd in this coarse  
And wayworn garb, with Pylades my friend, 580

Will as a guest and friend knock at the gate :

Our tongues shall imitate the rustic accent

Familiar to the mountain-race of Phocis :

Nor will the servants ('tis a villanous house)

Receive us cheerfully ; but as we are, 585

There shall we stand ; while each that passes by,  
With shrewd remarks shall shake his head, and say,

" Why are these strangers thus inhospitably

Excluded from the gates, if their arrival

Ægisthus knows mid his domestic train ?" 590

But if I pass the threshold of the gates,

And find him seated on my father's throne,

Or should he come to accost me ; be assured,

Quick as the eye can glance, ere he can say,

" Whence is this stranger ?" my impatient sword 595

Shall strike him dead. So shall the fell Erinnys,

That with a horrid joy riots in slaughter,

Quaff this third bowl of blood.—Go then, Electra,

Be watchful ; see that all things in the house 599

Be well disposed. And you, I charge you, guard

Your tongues ; be silent where you ought, and where

Your voice can aid me, speak. The rest my friend,

That guides my sword to vengeance, will o'ersee.

## CHORUS.

## STROPHE I.

Pregnant with ills, the dreary air  
 Gives sickness, pain, and terror birth : 605  
 The seas, that wind around the earth,  
 Fatal to man their hideous monsters bear :  
 Each forest in its shaggy sides,  
 That darkens o'er the perilous ground,  
 The lurking rav'nous savage hides, 610  
 While fierce birds wheel the summits round :  
 And mark with what tempestuous rage  
 Black from the skies the rushing winds engage.

## ANTISTROPHE I.

But who the dangerous thoughts can tell  
 That in man's daring bosom roll ; 615  
 Or whirl the more tempestuous soul  
 Of woman, when the tyrant passions swell ?  
 When love, to torment near allied,  
 Bids phrensy rule the troubled hour ?  
 Love, that exerts with wanton pride 620  
 O'er female hearts despotic power ;  
 And binds in his ungentle chain  
 . Each savage of the wood, each monarch of the main

## STROPHE II.

Think with what sullen phrensy fired  
 The Thestian dame with ruthless hand 625  
 Cast on the hearth the fatal brand ;  
 The flames consumed it, and her son expired.  
 With horror think on Scylla's deed :  
 To win the favour of the foes  
 (The golden bracelets were the meed), 630  
 Against her father's life she rose,  
 Approached the sleeping monarch's bed,  
 And reft the sacred honours of his head.

## ANTISTROPHE II.

Among these deeds of blood, that stain  
 The annals of the times of old, 635

625 Althæa.

Be that unhallow'd couch enroll'd,  
 Whose guilty loves this royal house profane,  
 Enroll'd be all that female hate  
 Form'd 'gainst the chief in arms renown'd ;  
 The chief, whose glorious, awful state 640  
 Foes mid their rage with reverence own'd :  
 Those glories, though they blaze no more,  
 Quench'd by a woman's hand, I still adore.

## EPODE.

In the black annals of far distant time  
 The Lesbian dames recorded stand ; 645  
 But the soul shudders at the crime,  
 And execrates the murders of their hand :  
 Basely at once the husbands bleed ;  
 The indignant gods abhor the deed.  
 And shall man dare with impious voice to approve  
 Deeds, that offend the powers above ? 651  
 Through the gored breast  
 With rage impress'd  
 The sword of justice hews the dreadful wound ;  
 And haughty might 655  
 That mocks at right,  
 Like the vile dust is trampled on the ground.  
 Righteous are thy decrees, eternal king,  
 And from the roots of justice spring :  
 These shall strike deep, and flourish wide, 660  
 While all that scorn them perish in their pride.  
 Fate the portentous sword prepares,  
 And the rough labours of the anvil shares ;  
 Wide through the house a tide of blood  
 Flows where a former tide had flowed ; 665  
 Erinnyes marks the destined hour,  
 Vengeful her meditated rage to pour.

## ORESTES, PYLADES, SERVANT.

ORES. What, does no servant hear me knock ?  
 Within  
 Who waits ? Again I knock : does no one hear ?  
 A third time to the servants of this house 670

I call, if to the stranger at his gate  
The great Ægisthus bears a courteous soul.

SER. Forbear; I hear. Who art thou, and from  
whence?

ORES. Go, tell the lords of this fair house, to them  
I come, charged with strange tidings: haste; 675  
For now the sable chariot of the night  
Rolls on apace; and the dark hour exhorts  
The way-spent traveller to repose beneath  
The hospitable roof. Call forth the matron  
That has the charge of these domestic cares; 680  
More decent if a man; for modesty  
There checks the falt'ring tongue, but to a man  
More confident a man speaks free and open.

CLYTEMNESTRA, ORESTES, PYLADES, ELECTRA

CLY. Speak, strangers, what your wants; here  
shall you find

All that becomes a house like this; warm baths, 685  
Refreshment of your toils, the well-spread couch  
Inviting soft repose, and over all  
An eye regarding justice. If your business  
Be of more serious import, asking counsel,  
The province this of men; we will inform them. 690

ORES. A Phocian am I, from the town of Daulis.  
Occasions of my own call'd me to Argos,  
Nor ask'd a better dress than this coarse garb  
Familiar to me: onwards as I travell'd  
I met a man unknown, myself to him 695  
Unknown; he courteous questioned me how far  
I journey'd, and inform'd me of my way,  
Strophius of Phocis, so I chanced to learn:  
"Stranger," says he, "since business of thy own  
Leads thee to Argos, let me charge thy honour 700  
To tell his parents that the young Orestes  
Is dead. Forget it not. Whether his friends  
With solemn obsequies will fetch him hence,  
Or in eternal rest our friendly earth  
Shall lay him in her hospitable bosom, 705



## CHORUS.

Now, my dear partners, slaves to this proud house,  
 Now let us show our fortitude, now teach  
 Our tongues a noble daring for Orestes.

Thou hallow'd earth, thou hallow'd mound, 745  
 Whose high sepulchral round  
 Lies on the royal chief, that o'er the main  
 To glory led his martial train,  
 Now hear us, now impart your aid :  
 On this important hour, 750  
 Persuasion, try thy fraudulent power :  
 And thou, through night's surrounding shade,  
 Come, Mercury, from the shades below,  
 And when the falchion flames, direct the avenging  
 blow !

## SERVANT, GILISSA, CHORUS.

SER. This stranger, it should seem, brings mourn-  
 ful tidings : 755

I see the tear steal from Gilissa's eye,  
 Nurse of Orestes. Wherefore dost thou pass  
 These doors ? The sorrows, that attend thy steps,  
 Shall here find no reward : expect it not.

GI. My royal mistress order'd me with speed 760  
 To call Ægisthus to these stranger guests ;  
 That man from man he with more certainty  
 Might learn this fresh report. Before the servants  
 She kept her smile beneath a mournful eye,

To hide her joy at this event ; to her 765  
 A joy indeed, but to this house a tale  
 Of deep affliction. He too, when he hears  
 The narrative, will from his soul rejoice.

Ah me ! what sorrows in successive train  
 Have in this house of Atreus pierced my soul 770  
 From ancient times ! but never have I suffer'd  
 A loss like this ; with patience other ills,  
 Well as I might, I bore ; but my Orestes

Was the dear object of my anxious thoughts ;  
 An infant I received him from his mother ; 775  
 I nursed him ; many a night to all his wants,  
 To all his cries attentive, with a care  
 That now avails me not. Ere reason dawns,  
 The nurse's care is needful ; in his cradle  
 The infant knows not to express his wants, 780  
 Rise they from thirst, or hunger, or the calls  
 Of nature ; with fond diligence I mark'd  
 The instinctive cry, nor with a squeamish niceness  
 Thought scorn of any office ; for my love  
 Made all delightful. Now, unhappy me ! 785  
 My dear Orestes is, I hear, no more :  
 But I am sent in haste to that vile man,  
 Whose rank pollution stains this noble house.  
 With pleasure this report will he receive.

CHŌ. With what appointment does she bid him  
 come ? 790

GI. Appointment ? Let me comprehend thy mean-  
 ing.

CHŌ. If with his train of guards, or unattended.

GI. She bids him come attended with his guards.

CHŌ. No, tell him not, this hated lord ; but  
 wear

A face of cheerfulness ; and urge him hither 795

Alone, devoid of fear, to be inform'd :

For the mind catches from the messenger

A secret elevation, and bold swell.

GI. This news, it seems, is welcome to thy soul.

CHŌ. But what if heaven's high king redress these  
 ills ? 800

GI. How ? With Orestes all our hopes are dead.

CHŌ. Not all. This needs no prophet to unfold it.

GI. Hast thou heard aught disproving this report ?

CHŌ. Go, bear thy message ; do as thou art or-  
 der'd :

The gods, whose care this is, will guide the event.

GI. I go, in all observant of thy precepts. 806  
 May what is best come from the fav'ring gods !

## CHORUS.

## STROPHE.

Now my righteous prayer approve,  
 Father and king of gods, Olympian Jove !  
 To thee may I unfold 810  
 Such vows, as from the modest and the wise  
 In the cause of justice rise.  
 O, may these eyes behold  
 Her power, adored by all, maintain  
 The glories of her awful reign ! 815  
 Hear me, monarch of the sky,  
 Protect him with thy guardian care ;  
 O'er his foes exalt him high,  
 That lord it in the regal chair !  
 His ruin'd honours thus restored, 820  
 With fiercer rage thy vengeance shall be pour'd.

## ANTISTROPHE.

Yoked to affliction's iron car  
 This orphan son of a loved father spare :  
 Restrain its headlong force ;  
 And let the rapid wheels, with many a bound 825  
 Rolling o'er the rugged ground,  
 Here stop their painful course.  
 And you, that guard this royal seat,  
 Its blazing wealth, its gorgeous state,  
 Hear, propitious gods, and save ! 830  
 Let not the blood of former slain  
 Fresh returns of vengeance crave ;  
 No more these crimson'd mansions stain :  
 Slaughter no more from slaughter rise,  
 If low beneath the righteous sword he lies ! 835

## MONODE.

Thou, that hast fix'd thy dreary reign  
 Deep in the yawning gulf below,  
 Yet let him rise, yet view this scene,  
 Around his gloomy eyeballs throw,  
 Distinct and clear the vengeance mark, 840  
 That threatens from her covert dark !



Thou, son of Maia, come, and with thee lead  
 Success, that crowns the daring deed :  
 To form the close and dark design,  
 Whether the ambiguous tale thou lovest to weave,  
 And throw around the veil of night ; 846  
 Or bidd'st ev'n truth itself deceive,  
 Display'd in all the dazzling blaze of light ;  
 The powers of secrecy are thine.  
 Then shall this pensive female train 850  
 These rich oblations pay no more ;  
 No more the melancholy strain,  
 Tuned to the voice of anguish, pour.  
 Raptured their triumph shall I see,  
 My friends from ruffian danger free. 855  
 And thou, when thy stern part is come, be bold :  
 Think how in blood thy father roll'd :  
 And when, " My son, my son," she cries,  
 To melt thy manly mind with plaintive moan,  
 Then to her guilty soul recall 860  
 Thy murder'd father's dying groan ;  
 And to his angry vengeance let her fall :  
 Like Perseus, turn thy ruthless eye ;  
 Just to thy friends above, thy friends below,  
 Aim with applauded rage the destined wound ; 865  
 Great in thy vengeance rush upon the foe,  
 And strike the murd'rer bleeding to the ground.

ÆGISTHUS, GILISSA, CHORUS.

ÆGIS. This message has a voice, that calls me forth  
 To learn with more assurance this report,  
 By certain strangers brought, touching the death  
 Of young Orestes : most unwelcome this ; 871  
 And the relation to this house will add  
 Fresh terror to the fear, whose unheal'd wound  
 Smarts inwardly, and rankles. Should I give  
 Full credit to this tale, or rather deem it 875  
 The idle offspring of these women's fears,  
 That lightly rose, and will as lightly die ?  
 Tell me, what proof gives credit to this rumour ?

GI. Indeed we heard it ; but go in, examine  
 These strangers : less regard is due to rumour 880  
 Than to clear information learn'd from them.

ÆGIS. I wish to see this stranger, and to ask him  
 If he himself was present at his death,  
 Or only speaks from an obscure report.  
 Deception finds no easy entrance here. 885

## CHORUS.

What should I say, eternal king,  
 Or how begin the strain ?  
 These passions how contain,  
 That in my throbbing breast tumultuous spring ?  
 O that, in aid, my daring deed 890  
 Might all the force of words exceed !  
 For now distain'd with blood the bick'ring sword  
 The contest ends ; if all  
 This royal race shall fall ;

Or the just laws their ancient state resuming, 895  
 And Liberty her light reluming,  
 Hail to his father's rights the son restored.  
 'Gainst two fierce wolves the youth contesting  
 stands

Alone : may heaven-sent conquest grace his hands !

ÆGIS. O ! I am slain. [within.

CHO. That groan ! Again that groan !  
 Whence ? What is done ? Who rules the storm  
 within ? 901

The deed is finish'd : let us keep aloof,  
 And seem unconscious of these ills : best stand  
 At distance, while Destruction ends her work.

SER. Wo, wo to me ! Wo to my slaughter'd lord !  
 Wo on my wretched head, and wo again ! 906

Ægisthus is no more. But open here,  
 Ye females, instantly unbar these doors :  
 The occasion calls for vigour, not to assist  
 The slain. Ho, here ! What ! call I to the deaf, 910  
 Or sleep you ? Where is Clytemnestra ? How

Employ'd! Her life stands at the sword's bare point.  
And ready vengeance seems to prompt the blow.

CLYTEMNESTRA, SERVANT, CHORUS.

CLY. What means thy clamour? Whence these  
shrieks of wo?

SER. They that were rumour'd dead have slain  
the living. 915

CLY. Ah me! I understand thee, though thy words  
Are dark; and we shall perish in the toils,  
Ev'n as we spread them. Give me instantly  
The slaught'ring axe; it shall be seen if yet  
We know the way to conquer, or are conquer'd: 920  
These daring measures have my wrongs enforced.

ORESTES, PYLADES, CLYTEMNESTRA, CHORUS.

ORES. Thee too I seek. He has his righteous  
meed.

CLY. Ah me! my dear Ægisthus, thou art dead.

ORES. And dost thou love the man? In the same  
tomb

Shalt thou be laid, nor ev'n in death forsake him. 925

CLY. Ah, stay thy hand, my son: my child, my  
child,

Revere this breast, on which thou oft hast slept,  
And oft thy infant lips have press'd its milk.

ORES. What shall I do, my Pylades? Restrain'd  
By filial reverence, dread to kill my mother? 930

Py. Where then the other oracles of Phœbus,  
Given from the Pythian shrine? The faithful vows,  
The solemn adjurations, whither vanish'd?

Deem all the world thy foes, save the just gods.

ORES. Thou hast convinced me; thy reproofs are  
just.— 935

Follow him: on his body will I slay thee.

Alive thou held'st him dearer than my father;

Then sleep with him in death, since thou couldst love  
him,

And hate the man who most deserved thy love.

CLY. I nursed thy youth, and wish to tend thy age.

ORES. What! shall my father's murd'rer dwell  
with me? 941

CLY. The Fates, my son, the Fates decreed his  
death.

ORES. And the same Fates decree that thou shalt  
die.

CLY. Dost thou not dread a mother's curse, my  
son?

ORES. That mother cast me out to want and  
misery. 945

CLY. Not so: I sent thee to a friendly house.

ORES. Though nobly born, a slave, and doubly  
sold.

CLY. What in exchange, what price did I receive?

ORES. I blush to charge thee with the guilty  
price.

CLY. Blush not; but with it name thy father's  
lightness. 950

ORES. Sitting in wanton ease, blame not his toils.

CLY. Barr'd from our husbands, irksome are our  
hours.

ORES. Yet in your ease your husband's toils sup-  
port you.

CLY. My son, my son, thou wilt not kill thy  
mother! 954

ORES. Thy hand, not mine, is guilty of thy death

CLY. Take heed; avoid a mother's angry Furies.

ORES. Relaxing here, how shall I 'scape my fa-  
ther's?

CLY. Methinks, while yet alive, before my tomb  
I pour the funeral strain, that naught avails me.

ORES. Naught; for my father's fate ordains thy  
death. 960

CLY. Ah me! I gave this dragon birth, I nursed  
him:

These terrors of the night were more than phantoms.

ORES. Foul and unnatural was thy murd'rous deed  
Foul and unnatural be thy punishment.

## CHORUS.

The double ruin ev'n of these awakes 965  
 Our grief. But since his cruel fate has plunged  
 Orestes deep in blood, pour we the prayer  
 That this fair day set not in endless night.

## STROPHE.

Revenge at length is come, though slow her pace,  
 For Priam's ruin'd race. 970

In Agamemnon's royal hall,  
 Roused by the Pythian god's inspiring call,  
 The glorious exile stands ;  
 With lion port, with martial mien,  
 Such as the god of war is seen, 975

The sword of justice light'ning in his hands.  
 Fired by the prompting voice divine,  
 That thunder'd from the shrine,

Dauntless he dared these dang'rous courts to tread.  
 Hark ! 'tis his voice : the walls around 980

His cheerful shouts resound :  
 No more the tyrants' malice shall he dread ;  
 The tyrants' lavish hands no more  
 Shall waste his treasured store ;  
 No more their pride usurp his throne, 985  
 Low in the dust their hostile pride o'erthrown

## ANTISTROPHE.

With dark and secret fraud his coward mind  
 The bloody deed design'd.

Revenge with solemn steps and slow  
 Advancing, meditates the secret blow ; 990

Daughter of heaven's high lord,  
 Though by the name of Justice known.  
 Her sovereign power weak mortals own,  
 She guides his hand, she points his thund'ring sword ;  
 And, rushing with impetuous might, 995

Assists him in the fight,  
 Breathing destructive fury on his foes.  
 Nor less 'gainst her, whose treach'rous hand  
 This injured house profaned ;  
 For his deep shrine with fury Phœbus glows : 1000

For ev'n the gods with sacred awe  
 Revere this righteous law,  
 To spurn the guilt that asks their aid ;  
 And be this heaven-commanding law obey'd.

## EPODE.

Cheerful the light begins to rise. 1005  
 Sunk was our sun, and long in darkness lay,  
 Nor promised the return of day :  
 Soon may his beams revisit our sad eyes !  
 When these cleansed floors no more retain  
 Polluting murder's sanguine strain, 1010  
 Time haply may behold his orient rays  
 O'er these illumined turrets blaze ;  
 And Fortune, mounted on her golden seat,  
 Rejoice in our triumphant state,  
 Rejoice to see our glories rise, 1015  
 And our unclouded sun flame o'er the sapphire skies

## ORESTES, CHORUS.

ORES. Behold the proud oppressors of my country,  
 The murderers of my father, the destroyers  
 Of his imperial house ; commanding awe  
 When seated on their thrones, retaining yet 1020  
 Their loves, of their affection if with truth  
 Hence we conjecture aught, and their oath stands  
 Inviolatè ; for to my father's death  
 They form'd the unhallow'd compact, and to die  
 Together : these events confirm their oath. 1025  
 Behold again, you that attentive mark  
 These ills, behold this artifice, the toils  
 That tangled hand and foot my suff'ring father.  
 This was his vestment ; form a ring around it,  
 Spread it, display it to the all-seeing sun, 1030  
 That with his awful eye he may behold  
 My mother's impious deeds, and in the hour  
 Of judgment be my witness that with justice  
 My vengeance fell on her. As for Ægisthus,  
 I reckon not of his death ; a sacred law 1035  
 He dared pollute ; and justly has he paid

The dreadful penalty. She 'gainst her husband,  
 Once the dear object of her love, to which  
 Her swelling zone bore many a precious pledge,  
 Now flam'd with ranc'rous hate, and murd'rous  
 malice. 1040

What noxious monster, what envenom'd viper,  
 That poisons with a touch the unwounded body,  
 Ere breathed such pestilent and baleful rage?  
 You view that vestment: tell me now, were all  
 The powers of language mine, what should I call it?  
 Toils planted for a savage? Or the bands 1046  
 That for the tomb enwrap the dead? A curse  
 Well may you call it, and the gyves of hell.  
 Such may the pilferer wear, the thievish slave  
 That pillages his guests, and trains his life 1050  
 To plunder; such the ruffian, whose rude hand,  
 Prompted to murd'rous deeds, is stain'd with blood.  
 Never, ye gods, may such a woman share  
 My bed: no, rather childless let me perish! 1054

CHO. O horror! horror! Dreadful were your deeds,  
 And dreadful is your death; the ling'ring vengeance  
 Burst with redoubled force. This was her deed,  
 Her cursed deed: this vestment is my witness,  
 Tinged by Ægisthus' sword; the gushing blood,  
 Now stiffen'd, stains its Tyrian-tinctured radiance.  
 Now I applaud his just revenge; now weep, 1061  
 Viewing this bloody robe, and mourn these deeds,  
 The suff'rings of this house, and ev'n this conquest,  
 Dreadful atonement! Never shall the life  
 Of mortal man be pass'd uncharged with ills: 1065  
 On some with rapid rage the tempest rolls;  
 Slowly on some the gath'ring clouds advance.

ORES. Be that another's care: I see the doom  
 Assign'd to me: for as the rapid car,  
 Whirl'd from its course by the impetuous steeds  
 That scorn the reins, so my exulting heart 1071  
 Bounds with tumultuous and ungovern'd passions.  
 Yet let me plead, while reason holds its seat,  
 Plead to my friends, that in the cause of justice

I slew my mother ; for her impious hands, 1075  
 Stain'd with my father's blood, call'd down revenge  
 From the offended gods. And here I plead,  
 To mitigate the deed, the Pythian prophet,  
 Phœbus, whose voice pronounced me from the  
 shrine,

If I achieved the vengeance, free from guilt : 1080  
 To my refusal dreadful was his threat  
 Of punishments, beyond the reach of thought.  
 Graced with this branch of olive, and this wreath,  
 I will approach his shrine, his central throne,  
 And his eternal fires, there to be cleansed 1085  
 From the pollution of this kindred blood :  
 No other roof receives me ; so the god  
 Enjoin'd. Meanwhile let Argos be inform'd,  
 And all this people witness what a weight  
 Of miseries oppress'd me ; dead or living, 1090  
 A vagrant and an exile from my country,  
 I leave these words behind me : having done  
 What honour gave in charge, I shall not blush  
 Hearing my fame reviled, nor bear in absence  
 The tongue of obloquy, the state of Argos 1095  
 Freed by this hand, that boldly crushed these  
 dragons.

Ha ! look, ye female captives, what are these  
 Vested in sable stoles, of Gorgon aspect,  
 Their starting locks tangled with knots of vipers ?  
 I fly, I fly ; I cannot bear the sight. 1100

CHO. What phantoms, what unreal shadows thus  
 Distract thee ? Victor in thy father's cause,  
 To him most dear, start not at fancied terrors.

ORES. These are no phantoms, no unreal shadows ;  
 I know them now ; my mother's angry Furies. 1105

CHO. The blood as yet is fresh upon thy hands,  
 And thence these terrors sink into thy soul.

ORES. Royal Apollo, how their numbers swell !  
 And the foul gore drops from their hideous eyes.

CHO. Within are lavers. Soon as thou shalt reach  
 His shrine, Phœbus will free thee from these ills. 1111



**ONES.** And see you nothing there ? Look ! look !  
I see them.

Distraction's in the sight : I fly, I fly.

**CHO.** Bless'd mayst thou be ; and may the god,  
whose eye 1114

Looks on thee, guard thee in these dreadful dangers !

Thrice on this royal house the bursting storm  
Hath pour'd its rage in blood. Thyestes first  
Mourn'd for his slaughter'd sons : the imperial lord  
The leader of the martial hosts of Greece, 1119  
Next fell beneath the murd'ring sword, and stain'd  
The ensanguined bath : then came the intrepid youth  
Arm'd with the sword—of Freedom should I say,  
Or Fate !—How long shall Vengeance pour her  
terrors !

When curb her fiery rage, and sleep in peace !

# THE FURIES

**DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.**

**PYTHIAN PRIESTESS,**

**APOLLO,**

**MINERVA,**

**GHOST OF CLYTEMNESTRA,**

**ORESTES,**

**CHORUS, the Furies**

# THE FURIES.

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## ARGUMENT.

**Orestes**, pursued by the Furies for the murder of his mother, arrives at Delphi, where he invokes the protection of Apollo, who directs him to proceed without delay to Athens, and to prostrate himself before the shrine of Minerva, whither he is pursued by his cruel tormentors—After hearing the arguments on each side, the goddess transfers the decision of the cause to the court of Areopagus, where Apollo conducts the defence of Orestes : and the judges being equally divided in opinion, Minerva bestows a casting vote in favour of the accused—Disappointed of their wretched victim, the Furies remain long inexorable to the threats and entreaties of Minerva, who at length succeeds in appeasing their rage by the promise of a temple and festival at Athens, to be dedicated to their honour.

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*Scene, the vestibule of the temple of the Pythian Apollo.*

## PRIESTESS.

With reverence first to the Earth I pay these vows,  
The first prophetic power : to Themis next,  
Who, next her mother, held, they say, this seat  
Oracular : Titanian Phœbe then,  
She too the daughter of the Earth, unforced                    5  
Assumed this seat ; to Phœbus at his birth  
Rich gifts, in honour of the day, she brought,  
And graced him with her name ; the Delian rock,  
The lake he left, and anchor'd in the port  
Sacred to Pallas : thence to this fair region,                    10  
And high Parnassus, held his solemn march :

Attendant on his state the sons of Vulcan  
 With reverend awe prepare his way, and tame  
 The rude and savage earth ; the joyful people  
 Hail his arrival, and the sceptred Delphus, 15  
 Lord of this realm, adored the passing god :  
 With his own sacred skill high Jove inspired  
 His raptured soul, and placed him on this throne,  
 The fourth prophetic god, whence now he gives  
 His father's oracles : to these I raise 20  
 My first breathed vows. Nor less Pronæan Pallas  
 Demands her meed of praise. Next I adore  
 The nymphs, that in Corycia's cavern'd rocks,  
 Loved haunt of soaring birds, in rustic state  
 Have fix'd their residence ; though Bacchus claims  
 The rude domain : my memory now recalls 26  
 With what a port he led his raging nymphs  
 To havoc, when devoted Pentheus fled  
 Affrighted, as a hare, before his hunters.  
 The fountains next of Plistus, and the power 30  
 Of Neptune I invoke : and lastly thee,  
 Supreme, all-perfect Jove ! These rites perform'd,  
 As priestess of the shrine I reassume  
 My sacred seat. Frequented as of old  
 Be this oracular fane ; and may the gods 35  
 Grant me auspicious answers : if from Greece  
 The inquirers, pleased return they with the Fates !  
 But my voice utters what the god inspires.

*[She enters the temple, and returns affrighted.]*

Things horrible to tell, and horrible  
 To sight, have forced me from the fane again : 40  
 Trembling with fear my lax limbs ill support  
 My frame, save that my hands with eager grasp  
 Uphold my sinking weakness as I pass.  
 As to the shrine with many a garland crown'd  
 I bend my age-enfeebled steps, beneath 45  
 The central dome, I see a man abhorr'd  
 By the just gods, a suppliant it should seem,  
 For such his posture : but his hands are stain'd  
 With blood : in one he holds a new-drawn sword,

High in the other crown'd with ample wreaths    50  
 An olive-branch, with wreaths of snowy wool  
 Handsomely wrought ; thus far I speak assured.  
 Before him lies a troop of hideous women  
 Stretched on the seats, and sleeping ; yet not women,  
 But Gorgons rather, nor the Gorgon form    55  
 Exactly representing, as I have seen them  
 Drawn by the painter's imitative pencil,  
 Snatching the viands from the board of Phineus.  
 These have not wings ; but clothed in sable stoles,  
 Abhorr'd and execrable ; as they sleep,    60  
 Hoarse in their hollow throats their harsh breath  
     rattles,  
 And their gall'd eyes a rheumy gore distil.  
 Ill suit such loathsome weeds the hallow'd fane  
 Graced with the forms of sculptured gods, ill suit  
 The roofs of men : so foul a sisterhood    65  
 Till now I never saw ; no land can boast  
 To have produced a breed so horrible,  
 But toils, and groans, and mischiefs must ensue.  
 But here Apollo reigns ; his awful power  
 Guards his own fane, auspicious to disclose    70  
 The dark decrees of Fate, to spread the glow  
 Of vig'rous health, to breathe the ambrosial gales,  
 And chase from other mansions all that hurts.

*The temple opens.*

APOLLO, ORESTES, CHORUS.

APOL. No : I will not forsake thee ; to the end  
 My guardian care shall favour and assist thee,    75  
 Present, or distant far : but to thy foes  
 I know not mercy. See this grisly troop,  
 Sleep has oppress'd them and their baffled rage,  
 Shall fail, grim-visaged hags, grown old

58 Phineus was king of Pæonia : being old and blind, his  
 daughters, Pyria and Erasia, wasted his wealth in wanton riot ;  
 hence the fable that the Harpies snatched the viands from his  
 table.

In loathed virginity : nor god nor man 80  
 Approach'd their bed, nor savage of the wilds ;  
 For they were born for mischiefs, and their haunts  
 In dreary darkness mid the yawning gulfs  
 Of Tartarus beneath, by men abhorr'd,  
 And by the Olympian gods. Fly then, nor yield 85  
 To weak distrust : they, be thou sure, will follow  
 With unremitting chase thy flying steps  
 Wide wand'ring o'er the firm terrene, and o'er  
 The humid sea, and wave-surrounded towns.  
 But faint thou not, sink not beneath thy toils ; 90  
 Fly to the city of Minerva, take  
 Thy suppliant seat, with reverence in thy arms  
 Grasp her time-honour'd image. Holding there  
 Concordant counsels, lenient of these ills,  
 We shall not want the means to heal thy pains, 95  
 And ratify thy peace : for at my bidding  
 Thy sword is purple with thy mother's blood.

ORES. 'Tis not unknown to thee, royal Apollo,  
 That I have done no deed of base injustice :  
 This known, forsake not, slight not my just cause ;  
 Strong is thy power, and faithful to defend. 101

APOL. Remember : let not fear unman thy mind.  
 And thou, my brother, by our ties of blood,  
 Our common parent, I adjure thee, Mercury,  
 Protect him ; rightly if the name of guide 105  
 Be thine, be thou his guide ; defend my suppliant ;  
 For Jove with reverence looks on mortal man,  
 That awfully reveres our guiding power.

#### GHOST OF CLYTEMNESTRA.

CLY. [*to the Chorus.*] What ! can you sleep ? Is  
 this a time to indulge  
 Your indolent repose ? Through your neglect 110  
 I am dishonour'd 'mong the dead, reviled,  
 For that I slew him with incessant taunts,  
 And wander with disgrace : this infamy,  
 I tell you, is through you : my horrid suff'rings,  
 From those most dear to me, excite no anger. 115

Of one offended god ; yet I was slain  
 By my son's hand. With thy mind's eye behold  
 These wounds : in sleep the vig'rous soul, set free  
 From gross corporeal sense, with keener view  
 Looks through the fate of mortals, dimly seen 120  
 Through the day's troubled beam. Oft have ye  
 tasted

My temp'rate off'rings mix'd with fragrant honey,  
 Grateful libations : oft the hallow'd feast  
 Around my hearth, at midnight's solemn hour,  
 When not a god shared in your rites : but this, 125  
 All this I see disparaged now, and scorn'd ;  
 And he is fled, light as the bounding roe,  
 Burst from your nets, with many a bitter scoff.  
 Hear me, O hear ! 'tis for my soul's repose  
 I plead : rouse your keen sense, infernal powers, 130  
 'Tis Clytemnestra calls you in your dreams.

Deep is your sleep ; meanwhile he distant flies :  
 I ask your aid ; else not a suppliant comes  
 To interrupt your rest : supine you lie  
 In dead repose, nor pity my afflictions ; 135  
 Meanwhile Orestes flies : shall he escape,  
 The murd'rer of his mother ? Sound thy sleep,  
 And loud thy deep-drawn breath. Hast thou e'er done  
 Aught, but fell deeds of mischief ? Rouse, awake :  
 The terrors of the dragon lose their force 140  
 Quench'd in the dark profound of toil and sleep.

CHO. Seize him there, seize him, seize him, take  
 good heed. [asleep.

CLY. In dreams dost thou pursue him, like the  
 hound

That opens in his sleep, on the eager chase  
 Ev'n then intent. And is this all ? Awake, 145  
 Arise : let not thy toil subdue thee ; know  
 What loss ensues if sleep enfeebles thee ;  
 And let these just reproaches sting thy mind,  
 Incentives to the wise : with fiery breath,  
 That snuffs the scent of blood, pursue this son, 150  
 Follow him, blast him in the prosp'rous chase.



CHO. Awake, arise : rouse her as I rouse thee.

Yet dost thou sleep ? Leave thy repose ; arise : <sup>[awaking.]</sup>  
Look we if this firm guard hath been in vain.

Ha, sisters, ha ! 'tis base, 'tis foul ; 155

Vain is our labour, vain our care :

This insult stings my tortured soul,

Untaught contempt and wrong to bear.

While overpower'd with sleep I lay,

Burst from the net escapes the prey. 160

Great triumph, treach'rous son of Jove,

In youth's fresh prime to mock my age !

Thee could this impious suppliant move,

(And thou a god) whose cruel rage

Plunged in his mother's breast his sword ? 165

Yet thou hast screen'd the wretch abhorr'd.

Clashing her scourge with hideous sound

Reproach upon my slumbers stole ;

Deep in my heart impress'd the wound ;

Ev'n yet chill horror shakes my soul. 170

'These are the deeds in misrule's hour

When youthful gods usurp the power.

See all defiled with gore thy throne,

There sat the murd'rer dropping blood.

Yet these pollutions are thy own ; 175

From thee the call, the impulse flow'd :

Such grace (despised the age-honour'd Fates)

Your new unhallow'd shrines awaits.

And shall this wretch in safety breathe,

Screen'd by thy power severe to me ? 180

No : let him fly the earth beneath,

Never, he never shall be free :

No : as he dared this murd'rous deed,

Murder shall fall upon his head.

APOL. Hence, I command you ; from my hallow'd  
seat 185

Begone with speed ; quit this oracular shrine :

This is no place to snatch your winged serpents,  
 And hurl them from your golden-twisted string,  
 To wring the black blood from the human heart  
 With torture, then disgorge your horrid feast 190  
 Of clotted gore : such guests my house abhors.  
 Begone where vengeance with terrific rage  
 Digs out the eyes, or from the mangled trunk  
 Remorseless rends the head ; to slaughters go,  
 Abortions, lurking ambush, rampired force, 195  
 To suff'rings, to impalements, where the wretch  
 Writhes on the stake in tortures, yelling loud  
 With many a shriek : in feasts like these, ye hags  
 Abhorr'd, is your delight ; sufficient proof  
 That execrable form : the desert wild, 200  
 Where the blood-rav'ning lion makes his den,  
 Such should inhabit ; nor with impure tread  
 Pollute these golden shrines : begone, and graze  
 Without a keeper ; for of such a herd  
 The indignant gods disdain to take the charge. 205

CHO. Now, royal Phœbus, hear me speak : in this  
 Not an associate art thou, but alone  
 Thou didst this deed, and thine alone the blame.

APOL. Why this to me ? Inform me ; but be  
 brief.

CHO. Thy voice, pronounced from this oracular  
 shrine, 210

Enjoin'd this wretch to shed his mother's blood.

APOL. Enjoin'd him to avenge his father's death.

CHO. To this strange murder promised thy pro-  
 tection.

APOL. I charged him to seek refuge in this shrine.

CHO. But these attendants thou with taunts in-  
 sultest. 215

APOL. Unworthy they to approach this sacred  
 seat.

CHO. Such was our charge : we come not uncom-  
 manded.

APOL. What is that honour ? Make the glorious  
 boast.

CHO. To drive the murd'ers of their mothers  
hence.

APOL. What ! fav'ring her, whose bold hand slew  
her husband ? 220

CHO. Nor should his hands be stain'd with kindred  
blood.

APOL. The sacred pledges of connubial Juno  
And Jove hast thou disparaged, set at naught ;  
And Venus is disparaged by thy words,  
From whom the dearest joys that sweeten life 225  
Arise ; for hallow'd is the nuptial bed,  
Of deeper sanctity than oaths, and guarded  
By justice. If to those, whose mutual rage  
Bathes in each other's blood, thy chast'ning hand  
Is gentle ; if thine eye looks milder on them, 230  
Nor flames with wrath ; unjustly does thy ven-  
geance

Pursue Orestes ; such I now behold  
Thy threat'ning mien, to others more benign.  
But Pallas, righteous queen, shall judge this cause.

CHO. But never, never will I quit this man. 235

APOL. Pursue him then ; to toil add fruitless toil.

CHO. Think not thy words shall make my rage  
relent.

APOL. Shall thy rage touch him ? No ; I brook it  
not.

CHO. At Jove's high throne thou art reputed  
great :

Yet, since a mother's blood calls loud for ven-  
geance, 240

My keen pursuit shall trace him step by step.

APOL. To me his vows are paid ; I will assist,  
And set him free : for dreadful were the wrath  
'Mong gods and men, should I betray my suppliant.

CHO. That moves not me.—These are his marks ;  
observe them, 245

Unerring guides, though tongueless : follow, follow,  
And, like the hound that by the drops of blood  
Traces the wounded hind, let us pursue him.

*Scene changes to the temple of Minerva at Athens.*

## ORESTES.

Hither, divine Minerva, by the mandate  
 Of Phœbus am I come. Propitious power, 250  
 Receive me, by the Furies' torturing rage  
 Pursued, no vile unhallow'd wretch, nor stain'd  
 With guilty blood, but worn with toil, and spent  
 With many a painful step to other shrines,  
 And in the paths of men. By land, by sea, 255  
 Wearied alike, obedient to the voice,  
 The oracles of Phœbus, I approach  
 Thy shrine, thy statue, goddess ; here to fix  
 My stand, till judgment shall decide my cause.

## ORESTES, CHORUS.

CHO. These toils oppress me, as with breathless  
 haste 260

I urge the keen pursuit : o'er the long tract  
 Of continent, and o'er the extended ocean,  
 Swift as the flying ship I hold my course,  
 Though on no pennons borne.—There, there he  
 stands,  
 His speed outstripping mine. Have I then found  
 thee ? 265

With joy I snuff the scent of human blood.—  
 Take heed, take heed : keep careful watch ; nor let  
 This murderer of his mother once more 'scape,  
 By secret flight, your vengeance : trembling, weak,  
 He hangs upon the image of the goddess, 270  
 And wishes to be clear'd of his base deeds.  
 It may not be : no : when the fluent moisture  
 Is sunk into the ground, 'tis lost for ever :  
 Can then a mother's blood, spilt on the earth,  
 Be from the earth recover'd ? No. Thy hour 275  
 Of suff'ring is arrived, the hour that gives  
 The purple stream, that warms thy heart, to quench  
 My thirst, which burns to quaff thy blood, and bend  
 To the dark realms below thy wasted limbs ;

There, for thy mother's murder, shalt thou learn 280  
 To taste of pain; there see whatever mortal  
 Dared an injurious deed, profaned the gods,  
 Attack'd with ruffian violence the stranger,  
 Or raised his impious hand against a parent,  
 Each with vindictive pains condemn'd to groan, 285  
 His crimes requiting; for beneath the earth  
 The awful judge of mortals Pluto sits,  
 And with relentless justice marks their deeds.

ORES. Train'd in affliction's rigid lore, I know  
 Many ablutions: when to speak I know, 290  
 When to be silent: inspiration now  
 With heavenly wisdom prompts my tongue to plead.  
 The faded blood is vanish'd from my hands,  
 Nor from my mother's slaughter leaves a stain  
 The recent crimson at Apollo's shrine 295  
 Wash'd off with lavers pure, with offer'd victims  
 Atoned. This honest prelude might be graced  
 With many an argument; nor came I hither  
 Consorted with a vile and impious band.  
 All things with time grow old, and wear away. 300  
 And now from hallow'd lips my pious prayer  
 Invokes the power presiding o'er this realm,  
 Royal Minerva, that she haste to aid  
 Her suppliant: so with voluntary zeal  
 Myself, my country, all the Argive people, 305  
 To her with justice I devote for ever.  
 If in the coasts of Libya, on the banks  
 Of Triton, native stream, she sets her foot  
 Or bare, or buskin'd, prompt to aid her friends;  
 If o'er the plains of Phlegra, like a chief 310  
 That marshals his bold troops, she darts her eye,  
 Her presence I implore; though distant far,  
 The goddess hears; to free me from these ills.

CHO. No: not Apollo, nor Minerva's power  
 Shall set thee free, but that an abject outcast 315  
 Thou drag thy steps, seeking in vain to find  
 Rest to thy joyless soul, exhausted, worn,  
 A lifeless shadow. Yet thy pride replies not,

Me and my threats despising, though to me  
 Devoted, my rich victim, and alive 320  
 To feed my rage, not offer'd on the altar.  
 Hear now the potent strain, that charms thee mine.

## PROSODE.

Quickly, sisters, stand around ;  
 Raise your choral warblings high ;  
 Since, the guilty soul to wound, 325  
 Swells the horrid harmony.  
 Since to mortal man we show  
 How we give his fate to flow ;  
 Since our will his doom ordains,  
 Show that justice 'mong us reigns. 330  
 He, whose hands from guilt are pure  
 Stands in innocence secure ;  
 And from youth to honour'd age  
 Fears not our vindictive rage.  
 To the wretch, that strives to hide 335  
 Ruffian hands with murder died,  
 Clothed in terrors we appear,  
 Unrelentingly severe ;  
 And, faithful to the injured dead,  
 Pour our vengeance on his head. 340

## STROPHE I.

Hear me, dread parent, sable-vested Night,  
 O hear the avenger of each impious deed ;  
 Whether we lie in shades conceal'd,  
 Or to the eye of day reveal'd !  
 Seest thou how Phœbus robs me of my right, 345  
 From my just rage the trembling victim freed,  
 Destined his mother's death to atone,  
 And for her blood to shed his own !  
 O'er my victim raise the strain,  
 And let the dismal sound 350  
 His tortured bosom wound,  
 And to phrensy fire his brain.  
 Silent be the silver shell,  
 While we chant the potent spell ;  
 Then yelling bid the infernal descant roll, 355  
 To harrow up his soul.

## ANTISTROPHE I.

Avenging Fate, as bending o'er the loom  
 She wove the web, to us this part assign'd ;  
 " Whoe'er the laws shall dare disdain,  
 And his rude hand with murder stain, 366  
 Pursue him Furies, urge his rigorous doom,  
 Till refuge in the realms below he find."  
 Ev'n there not free ; my chastening power  
 Pursues him to that dreary shore.  
 O'er my victim raise the strain, 365  
 And let the dismal sound  
 His tortured bosom wound,  
 And to phrensy fire his brain.  
 Silent be the silver shell,  
 While we chant the potent spell ; 376  
 Then yelling bid the infernal descant roll,  
 To harrow up his soul.

## STROPHE II.

This task assign'd us at our natal hour,  
 Far from the immortal gods our steps we bend :  
 Nor welcome at the social feast, 375  
 Nor honour'd with a splendid vest ;  
 For mine I proudly claim the dreadful power  
 From its firm base the ruin'd house to rend,  
 When in calm peace its ruthless lord  
 Distains with a friend's blood his sword, 380  
 Him, though strong, we rush to seize ;  
 And for the new-pour'd blood  
 Demand his purple flood,  
 Glorifying in the sacrifice ;  
 Duteous hastening to remove 385  
 Cares like these from angry Jove ;  
 And spare, while fierce for blood my vengeance flies,  
 The terrors of the skies.

## ANTISTROPHE II.

His wrathful eye heaven's mighty monarch rolls,  
 Awfully silent, on this blood-stained race. 390  
 But all the gorgeous blaze of power,  
 Which trembling mortals here adore

When, manled in these sable-shaded stoles,  
 With blood-besprinkled feet we urge the chase,  
 Sinks darkling to the infernal shades, 395  
 And all its boasted glory fades.  
 Near him, as he flies, I bound,  
 And when, with guilt oppress'd,  
 His weary steps would rest,  
 Spurn him headlong to the ground. 400  
 Senseless he, perchance, and blind,  
 Such the phrensy of his mind,  
 Such the deep gloom guilt spreads around h's walls.  
 He knows not that he falls.

## EPODE.

But shall sheltering wall or gloom 405  
 That from dark'ning guilt is spread,  
 Hide him from his rigorous doom,  
 Or protect his destined head?  
 Mine the vengeance to design,  
 And to stamp it deep is mine. 410  
 Sternly mindful of the crime,  
 Nor by man appeased, nor time,  
 When the wretch, whose deed unblest'd,  
 Dares profane high heaven's behest,  
 Though conceal'd from mortal eyes, 415  
 Through the sunless darkness flies,  
 We pursue the rugged chase,  
 And his dubious footsteps trace.  
 Hear, then, guilty mortals hear,  
 And the righteous god revere; 420  
 Hear the task to me assign'd,  
 Fate the firm decree shall bind:  
 Mine the prize of old ordain'd,  
 Never with dishonour stain'd,  
 Though my drear abode profound 425  
 Night and darkness cover round.

## MINERVA, ORESTES, CHORUS.

**MIN.** It was a voice that called : though distant far



I heard it, where Scamander laves the fields,  
 My ancient right : to me the Grecian chiefs  
 With voluntary zeal assign'd this portion 430  
 Of their rich conquest, ever to be mine,  
 Selected as a gift to the brave race  
 Of Theseus. With a speed that equals wings  
 My vigorous steeds thence whirl'd my car, the  
 wind

Against my ægis rustling as I pass'd. 435  
 But who are these consorted here ? Mine eye  
 Views them unterrified ; but much I marvel.  
 What, and whence are you ? To you all I speak,  
 To him the stranger, seated at my image,  
 And you, whose hideous shape resembles naught  
 Of mortal race, nor goddesses in heav'n 441  
 Seen by the gods, nor like the human form.  
 But the deform'd to taunt with obloquy  
 Is unbeseeming ; Justice starts at it.

CHO. Daughter of Jove, take our report in brief.  
 We are the gloomy progeny of Night, 446  
 Call'd Furies in the drear abodes below.

MIN. I know your race, and aptly added titles.

CHO. Soon shalt thou learn my honours, and my  
 office.

MIN. Speak clearly then, without perplexing pre-  
 face. 450

CHO. 'Tis ours to drive the murd'ers from the  
 house,—

MIN. This all the vengeance to their guilt  
 assign'd ?

CHO. Where they shall never taste or peace or  
 joy.

MIN. And does thy yelling voice thus drive him  
 out ?

CHO. He dared to be the murd'rer of his mo-  
 ther. 455

MIN. Urged by the force of no necessity ?

CHO. What force could urge the wretch to kill  
 his mother ?

MIN. He hears but half that hears one party only.

CHO. He would refuse an oath, nor dares propose it.

MIN. Thy aim seems rather to obtain the fame of Justice, than to execute her laws. 461

CHO. How so? inform me; thou art rich in wisdom.

MIN. Deeds of injustice are not clear'd by oaths.

CHO. Hear thou the cause, and judge with righteous justice.

MIN. Rests the decision of the cause on me? 464

CHO. We reverence thee as worthiest mid the worthy.

MIN. Say, stranger, what canst thou reply to this?

Speak first thy race, thy country, thy misfortunes;  
Then urge thy plea against this accusation;

If trusting in the justice of thy cause, 470

Thus seated near my altar, thou embrace

With reverend hands, a suppliant as Ixion,

My statue. Be thy answer short and clear,

ORES. Royal Minerva, let me first remove,  
What thy last words, with much concern, suggest.

I am not stain'd with blood, nor shall my hand 476  
Pollute thy statue: what I urge in proof

Bears strong conviction. Him, whose hands are red

With blood, the laws forbid to plead his cause,

Till with its flowing gore the new-slain victim 480

Has made atonement, and the cleansing wave

Restored his purity. In other shrines

Long since these hallow'd rites have been perform'd

With offer'd victims and the fluent stream.

Blameless of this offence, I next declare 485

472 Ixion, having treacherously murdered his wife's father, was refused purification, and roamed through the world a vagabond, till Jupiter, commiserating his condition, expiated his crime, and received him into heaven.

Z

My race : an Argive : nor to thee unknown  
 My sire, the leader of the naval hosts,  
 The royal Agamemnon ; for with him  
 Thy conquering hand laid the proud walls of Troy  
 In dust : returning to his house he perish'd 490  
 By deeds of baseness ; for my dark-soul'd mother  
 With various trains in private murder'd him ;  
 The ensanguined bath attested the foul deed.  
 I, then an exile, bending back my steps,  
 Slew her that gave me birth ; nor shall my tongue  
 Deny the deed ; it was a vengeance due 496  
 To my loved father's shade : so Phœbus deem'd,  
 Who urg'd me, and denounced heart-rending woes,  
 Should I shrink back refusing to avenge  
 The guilt : but if with justice, be thou judge. 500  
 To thy deciding voice my soul submits.

MIN. This is a cause of moment, and exceeds  
 The reach of mortal man : nor is it mine  
 To judge, when blood with eager rage excites  
 To vengeance. Thou with preparation meet 505  
 Hast to my shrine approach'd a suppliant pure,  
 Without offence ; and to my favour'd city  
 Uncharged with blame I readily receive thee.  
 Let these, whose ruthless rage knows not the touch  
 Of pity, not succeeding in their plea, 510  
 Retire a while, till judgment shall decide  
 The contest : from their breasts black poison flows,  
 And taints the sick'ning earth. Thus I pronounce  
 To each, unequal in this dubious strife  
 To give content to both. But since to me 515  
 The appeal is made, it shall be mine to elect  
 Judges of blood, their faith confirm'd by oath  
 And ratify the everlasting law.  
 Prepare you for the trial, call your proofs,  
 Arrange your evidence, bring all that tends 520  
 To aid your cause : I, from the holiest men  
 That grace my city will select to judge  
 This cause with justice ; men, whose sanctity  
 Abhors injustice, and reveres an oath.

## CHORUS

## STROPHE I.

Confusion on these upstart laws ! 525  
     Havoc with haughty stride  
 Shall march, and wave her banner wide,  
 If venial be this bloody caitiff's cause.  
     Impunity shall mortals lead  
     To ev'ry savage deed, 530  
     And prompt the son with rage unblest'd  
 To plant the dagger in the parent's breast.  
     I smile at all this lawless force ;  
     Nor shall our dreaded power  
 In vengeance visit impious mortals more : 535  
 No : let Destruction take her destin'd course.

## ANTISTROPHE I.

While his own anguish one shall moan,  
     He hears his neighbour tell,  
 Appall'd, of deeds as fierce, as fell ;  
 Tear falls to tear, and groan succeeds to groan. 540  
     Nor shall the rolling storm of wo  
     One gleam of comfort know.  
 When anguish rends the tortured breast,  
 Be not to us the mournful call addressed.  
     " Where is your throne, ye Furies, where 545  
     Justice," the father cries,  
 Or the pale mother, as in blood she lies :  
 But Justice from her throne is exiled far.

## STROPHE II.

Yet are there hours when conscious fear  
     And the stern eye, that darts 550  
     Severely through their secret hearts,  
 With sober counsels check their mad career.  
     For when no ray of heavenly light  
     Breaks through the sullen night,  
     Dark deeds ensue, and virtue's power 555  
 By man, by state is revered no more.  
     Shall he, the wretch that scorns control,  
     And spurns each sacred law ;

Or he that drags his chain with servile awe,  
 Feel the sweet peace that calms the virtuous  
 soul ! 560

## ANTISTROPHE II.

Placed in the midst does strength reside  
 With an indignant frown  
 On each extreme the gods look down :  
 Injustice is the child of impious pride.  
 But all the joys that life can know 565  
 From tempered wisdom flow.  
 To Justice chief thy soul incline,  
 And bow with rev'rence at her hallow'd shrine ;  
 Nor dare, allured by cursed gold,  
 With foot profane and bold 570  
 To spurn her altars : Vengeance waits the crime,  
 And, arm'd with terrors, knows her destin'd time.

## EPODE.

Let each with awe profound  
 A parent's honour'd name obey :  
 Each to thy milder voice, humanity, 575  
 Attentive homage pay,  
 When for the stranger thou art found  
 Pleading thy strains of pious potency,  
 He, that to virtue's heavenly power  
 Unforced his willing soul shall bow, 580  
 Nor ruin's tyrant rage shall know,  
 Nor keen affliction's torturing hour :  
 But he, that dares her sacred laws despise,  
 Trampling on justice to amass his prey,  
 Appall'd shall hear the rushing whirlwinds rise, 585  
 And tremble at the storms that swell the sea.  
 Wild with despair  
 He pours his prayer,  
 Whirl'd in the giddy tempest round ;  
 His blasted pride 590  
 The gods deride,  
 And all his daring hopes confound ;  
 Smile, as they view him rack'd with pain,  
 Bound in misfortune's iron chain ;

As on the pointed rock they see him thrown, 595  
To perish there unpitied and alone.

MINERVA, APOLLO, ORESTES, CHORUS.

*The Judges seated.*

MIN. Now, herald, let thy voice to all my people  
Proclaim attention ; sound the Tuscan trumpet,  
That its ear-piercing notes may fill the city,  
Commanding silence, and impressing awe 600  
Due to this great assembly ; that the state  
May learn my everlasting laws, and hear  
The righteous judgment that decides this cause.

CHO. Royal Apollo, where thy rule extends,  
There lord it ; but what right canst thou claim  
here ? 605

APOL. To give my evidence I come. This man  
Is at my shrine a suppliant, at my shrine  
He sojourns ; with ablutions pure I cleansed  
His stains of blood ; and now shall plead his cause,  
Our common cause, since for his mother's death 610  
Your accusations reach ev'n me : but thou  
Urge, as thou canst, thy plea : open the charge.

MIN. This is incumbent on you ; open then  
The charge : the accuser's voice must first explain  
Clearly through ev'ry circumstance the cause. 615

CHO. Though we are many, brief shall be our  
words :

Now answer me in order, word for word.  
My first demand is, didst thou kill thy mother ?

ORES. I did : and never shall deny the deed.

CHO. First of the three this is one signal foil. 620

ORES. Unmoved I stand, and thy proud vaunts are  
vain.

CHO. Declare it then at once : how didst thou kill  
her ?

620 In wrestling, the victory was adjudged to him who gave  
his antagonist three falls.

ORES. I drew my sword and plunged it in her breast.

CHO. At whose persuasion? Or by whose advice?

ORES. By his oracular voice: he will attest it. 625

CHO. The prophet urge thee to this bloody deed?

ORES. Nor thus far have I to accuse my fate.

CHO. Far other language the condemning vote  
Will teach thy tongue.

ORES. My confidence is firm;  
My father from the tomb will send me aid. 630

CHO. Confiding in the dead, he slew his mother.

ORES. Her breast was spotted with a double stain.

CHO. What may this mean? Speak, and inform  
thy judges.

ORES. She slew my father when she slew her husband.

CHO. And yet thou livest: from that stain she's  
free. 635

ORES. Why, while she lived, didst thou not drive  
her out?

CHO. She had no kindred blood with him she slew.

ORES. Is mine allied then to my mother's blood?

CHO. How else, before thy birth, did she sustain,  
How nourish thee? The murd'rous wretch disowns  
That dearest of all ties, a mother's blood. 641

ORES. Now let me call thy testimony; now  
Declare, Apollo, if I slew her justly;  
For that I slew her, in such circumstance,  
I not deny: if rightfully or not, 645  
Decide, that I to these may plead thy sanction.

APOL. To you, the great and reverend council here  
Placed by Minerva, will I speak, and truly;  
For never shall the god of prophecy  
Pronounce a falsehood: never have I utter'd 650  
From my oracular seat to man, to woman,  
Or state, save what the great Olympian sire  
Shall have commanded. Of his sovereign justice  
Learn you the force, and bow to his high will;  
Nor deem an oath of greater power than Jove. 655

**CHO.** This oracle, thou say'st, was dictated  
By Jove, to charge Orestes, while his hand  
Was arm'd with vengeance for his father's murder,  
'To pay no reverence to his mother's blood.

**APOL.** Of higher import is it, when a man 660  
Illustrious for his virtues, by the gods  
Exalted to the regal throne, shall die,  
Die by a woman's hand, by one that dares not  
Bend, like an Amazon, the stubborn bow.  
But hear me, Pallas, hear me, you that sit 665  
In awful judgment to decide this cause.

Victorious from the war, with glory crown'd,  
And graced with many a trophy, at the bath  
She smilingly received him ; there refresh'd,  
As o'er his head he threw the splendid robe 670  
Prepared to entangle him, she slew her husband.  
So died the chief, the glorious, the renown'd,  
The leader of the warlike troops of Greece :  
And such I speak this woman, reverend judges,  
To strike your souls with horror at the deeds. 675

**CHO.** So Jove, it seems, respects the father's fate ;  
Yet on his father he could bind the chain,  
The hoary Saturn : thus his deed gainsays  
Thy words : I pray you mark the poor evasion.

**APOL.** Detested hags, the abhorrence of the gods !  
He could unbind these chains, and the release 681  
Has a medicinal power. But when the blood  
That issues from the slain sinks in the dust,  
It never rises more. For this my sire  
No remedy admits, in all besides 685  
With sovereign power or ruins or restores.

**CHO.** See with what ill-judged zeal thy arguments  
Labour to absolve him ! Shall the wretch, whose  
hand

Spilt on the earth the kindred blood that flow'd  
Within his mother's veins, return to Argos 690  
Lord of his father's house ? Before what altar,  
Sacred to public off'rings, shall he bend ?  
What friendly laver shall admit his hands ?



APOL. This too shall I explain ; and mark me well,  
If reason guide my words. The mother's power  
Produces not the offspring, ill call'd hers. 696

No : 'tis the father, that to her commits  
The infant plant ; she but the nutrient soil  
That gives the stranger growth, if fav'ring Heaven  
Denies it not to flourish : this I urge 700

In proof, a father may assert that name  
Without a mother's aid : an instance sits  
Minerva, daughter of Olympian Jove ;  
Not the slow produce of nine darkling months,  
But form'd at once in all her perfect bloom : 705  
Such from no pregnant goddess ever sprung.

Thy state, thy people, Pallas, be it mine  
To exalt to glory, and what else of greatness  
I know to give. This suppliant to thy shrine  
I sent, assuring his eternal faith ; 710

Thy votary he, and his descendants thine,  
From sire to son through all succeeding ages.

MIN. The pleas are urged : these now I charge to  
give  
Sentence, with strict regard to truth and justice.

CHO. We have discharged our shafts ; and now I  
wait 715

To hear what sentence shall adjudge this cause.

MIN. What, am I never to escape your censure ?

CHO. Give what you've heard due weight ; and  
with pure hearts

Pronouncing sentence, reverence your high oath.

MIN. Ye citizens of Athens, now attend, 720  
While this great council in a cause of blood  
First give their judgment. But through future ages  
This awful court shall to the hosts of Ægeus  
With uncorrupted sanctity remain.

Here on this mount of Mars the Amazons 725  
Of old encamp'd, when their embattled troops  
March'd against Theseus, and in glitt'ring arms  
Breathed vengeance ; here their new-aspiring tow'rs

Raised high their rampired heads to storm his  
towers ;

And here their hallow'd altars rose to Mars : 736

Hence its illustrious name the cliff retains,  
The mount of Mars. In this the solemn state  
Of this majestic city, and the awe

That rises thence shall be a holy guard  
Against injustice, shall protect the laws 737

Pure and unsullied from the oppressive power  
Of innovation, and the adulterate stain  
Of foreign mixture. Should thy hand pollute  
The liquid font with mud, where wilt thou find  
The grateful draught ? Let not my citizens 740

Riot in lawless anarchy, nor wear  
The chain of tyrant power, nor from their state  
Loose all the curb of rigour : this removed,  
What mortal man, uncheck'd with sense of fear,  
Would reverence justice ? Let the majesty 745

That here resides, impress your souls with awe  
Your country has a fence, your town a guard,  
Such as no nation knows ; not those that dwell  
In Scythia, or the cultured realms of Pelops :  
This court, superior to the alluring glare 750

Of pestilent gold, this court, that claims your awe  
Severely just, I constitute your guard,  
Watchful to shield your country and its peace :  
These my commands to ev'ry future age  
Have I extended. Now behooves you, judges, 755  
Give test of your integrity ; bring forth  
The shells ; with strictest justice give your suffrage.  
And reverence your high oath. This is my charge.

CHO. Nor of their honours rob this train, whose  
power

Is dreadful in the drear abodes below. 760

APOL. And be my oracles, the voice of Jove,  
Revered, nor seek to move their firm decree.

CHO. Beyond thy charge protecting deeds of  
blood,

Nor reverend are thy oracles, nor pure.

APOL. Think of the expiation which of old 765  
Ixion made for blood : wilt thou arraign

My father's councils there ? Or slept his wisdom ?

CHO. Thou say'st it : but if justice fails me here,  
This land shall feel the terrors of my vengeance.

APOL. Unhonour'd thou by ev'ry power of heaven,  
Or young, or old ; to triumph here is mine. 771

CHO. Such in the house of Pheres were thy  
deeds,  
When, won by thy alluring voice, the Fates  
On mortal man conferr'd immortal honours.

APOL. To aid, to grace the pious, when their  
prayers 775  
Rightly invoke our influence, is just.

CHO. What ! hast thou crush'd the power of an-  
cient Fate,  
And wouldst thou now delude our honour'd age ?

APOL. Soon shall thy malice, baffled in this cause,  
Shed its black venom harmless to thy foes. 780

CHO. Since thy proud youth insults my hoary  
years,

I wait the event in silence, and suspend  
The fury of my vengeance on this city.

MIN. Last to give suffrage in this cause is mine :  
In favour of Orestes shall I add 785

My vote ; for as no mother gave me birth,  
My grace in all things, save the nuptial rites,  
Attends the male, as from my sire I drew  
The vigour of my soul. No woman's fate,  
Stain'd with her husband's blood, whom nature  
form'd 790

Lord of his house, finds partial preference here.

Orestes, if the number of the votes

Be equal, is absolved. Now from the urn

Let those among the judges, to whose honour  
This office is assign'd, draw forth the lots. 795

772 Admetus, the son of Pheres, whose flocks Apollo tended  
when banished from heaven.

ORES. O Phœbus, what the event that waits this cause !

CHO. O Night, dark mother, through thy sable gloom

Seest thou these things ? Now on the doubtful edge  
Of black despair I stand, or joyful light ;

Driven out with infamy, or graced with honours. 800

APOL. Now, strangers, count the lots with righteous heed,

And with impartial justice sever them.

One shell misplaced haply brings ruin, one

May raise again a desolated house.

MIN. He is absolved, free from the doom of blood.  
For equal are the numbers of the shells. 806

ORES. O thou, whose tutelary power preserved  
The honours of my house, thou, goddess, thou  
Hast to his country and his native rites  
Restored this exile ; and each Greek shall say, 810  
This Argive to his father's throne returns,  
So Pallas wills, and Phœbus, and the god  
All-powerful to protect : my father's death  
He mark'd severe, and looks indignant down  
On those that patronise my mother's cause. 815

First to this country, and to this thy people,  
Through time's eternal course I pledge my faith,  
And bind it with an oath : now to my house  
I bend my steps : never may chieftain thence  
Advance against this land with ported spear. 820  
If any shall hereafter violate

My oath now made, though then these mould'ring bones

Rest in the silent tomb, my shade shall raise  
Invincible distress, disasters, toils, 824  
To thwart them, and obstruct their lawless march.

Till in dismay repentant they abhor  
Their enterprise. But to the social powers,  
That reverence this thy state, and lift the lance  
In its defence, benevolent shall be  
My gentler influence. Hail, goddess ; hail, 830

Ye guardians of the city : be your walls  
 Impregnable, and in the shock of war  
 May conquest grace the spear that aids your cause !

## CHORUS.

I burst with rage. With cruel pride  
 These youthful gods my slighted age deride ; 835  
 And, the old laws disdaining to obey,

Rend from my hands my prey.  
 Tortured with grief's corroding smart,  
 And taught disgrace and scorn to know,  
 Distilling from my anguish'd heart 840

The pestilential drop shall flow :  
 Where'er it falls, nor fruit around  
 Nor leaf shall grace the blasted ground ;  
 Through the sick air its baleful dews  
 A caustic venom shall diffuse ; 845

And breathing on this hated race  
 With deep rough scars the beauteous form deface.  
 Vainly shall I heave my sighs,  
 Or bid my angry vengeance rise !  
 To insults, which my bosom rend, 850  
 Vulgar spirits scorn to bend ;  
 And shall thy daughters, awful Night, in vain  
 Of their disgrace complain !

MIN. Let my entreaties move you : bear not this  
 With such deep anger ; for no conquest here 855  
 Wounds your insulted honour : from the urn  
 The lots came equal, so disposed by truth,  
 To thee no insult off'ring ; and from Jove  
 Flow'd splendid signs : he gave the oracle,  
 He added his high test, that for the deed 860  
 Orestes should not suffer. Breathe not then  
 Your heavy vengeance on this land ; restrain  
 Your indignation ; o'er these sick'ning fields  
 Drop not your pestilential dews, nor blast  
 Their glitt'ring verdure, and their springing seeds.  
 And here I pledge my faith, this grateful land 865  
 Shall willingly receive you, raise your seats

High at their blazing hearths, and, with deep awe  
Impress'd, pay reverend honours to your power.

## CHORUS.

I burst with rage. With cruel pride 870  
These youthful gods my slighted age deride ;  
And, the old laws disdaining to obey,

Rend from my hands my prey  
Tortured with grief's corroding smart,  
And taught disgrace and scorn to know, 875

Distilling from my anguish'd heart  
The pestilential drop shall flow :  
Where'er it falls, nor fruit around  
Nor leaf shall grace the blasted ground ;  
Through the sick air its baleful dews 880

A caustic venom shall diffuse ;  
And breathing on this hated race  
With deep rough scars the beauteous form deface.

Vainly shall I heave my sighs,  
Or bid my angry vengeance rise ? 885  
To insults, which my bosom rend,  
Vulgar spirits scorn to bend ;  
And shall thy daughters, awful Night, in vain  
Of their disgrace complain ?

MEN. No, you are not disgraced ; nor let your  
wrath, 890

Immortal as you are, to mortal man  
Spread desolation o'er the earth. I too  
Prevail with Jove. And wherefore should I say  
Of all the gods I only know the keys  
That ope those solid doors within whose vaults 895  
His thunder sleep ? Of these there is no need.  
By me persuaded let thy hasty tongue  
Forbear those threats, from which no fruit can flow,  
But ruin to the earth : compose that rage, 899  
Whose swelling tide o'erflows all bounds, with me  
In the same mansion, and with equal honours  
Revered, enjoying through these ample realms  
prime oblations, victims doom'd to bleed

For blessings on the birth, or nuptial hour, 904  
That thou shalt thank me for this friendly counsel.

## CHORUS.

Shall I brook this ? Shall I then deign  
In this cursed land to spend my slighted age,  
And my lost honours mourn in vain ?  
No : be each vengeful thought inflamed with rage.  
Ah me, the keen, the madd'ning smart ! 910  
Deep, deep it cuts, it rends my heart.  
Hear, awful Night, my raving passion hear !  
These gods, with a malignant smile,  
Ah me ! my baffled power beguile.  
And from my brows the public honours tear. 915

Mrs. Thine anger will I bear with, for thy years  
Are more than mine, thy wisdom more ; though  
Jove

Hath with no niggard grace on me bestow'd  
A prudent sense. You yet are strangers here ;  
But I foresee, when once your seats are fix'd, 920  
These scenes will be delightful, and the flow  
Of future years to the inhabitants  
Roll more abundant honours. Where Erechtheus  
Raised high his regal structures, thou shalt hold  
Thy residence, receiving from the men, 925  
And from the train of females, such high honours  
As mortals never paid thee. Cast not then  
On these my realms the pestilent bane, that fires  
Beyond the rage of wine the frantic youth  
To wild ensanguined slaughter : in their hearts 930  
Pour not the fury of the crested cock  
Exciting discord, broils, and civil war.  
To foreign wars, when dangers threaten nigh,  
Let glory lead their arms : domestic strife  
Is hateful to my soul : bethink thee well, 935  
Thou hast thy choice, by courtesy to win  
Returns of courtesy, and revered high  
To share this country grateful to the gods.

## CHORUS.

Shall I brook this ? Shall I then deign  
 In this cursed land to spend my slighted age, 940  
 And my lost honours mourn in vain ?  
 No : be each vengeful thought inflamed with rage.  
 Ah me, the keen, the madd'ning smart !  
 Deep, deep it cuts, it rends my heart.  
 Hear, awful Night, my raving passion hear ! 945  
 These gods, with a malignant smile,  
 Ah me ! my baffled power beguile.  
 And from my brows the public honours tear.

MIN. I will not yet surcease to speak thee fair ;  
 And never with just cause shalt thou complain 950  
 That with inhospitable pride my youth,  
 And the rude race of mortals dwelling here,  
 Drove thee, an ancient goddess, with disgrace  
 An outcast from this land. If yet the power  
 Of mild persuasion, dropping from my lips 955  
 In words of sweet and soothing courtesy,  
 Hath not lost all its virtue, thou wilt stay :  
 If thou disdain to stay, yet not with justice  
 Canst thou with wrath or vengeance load this town,  
 Nor on its people shed thy baneful dews. 960  
 'Tis in thy choice to bless this land, and fix  
 With everlasting honours here thy seat.

CHO. What seat, say, royal virgin, shall be mine ?

MIN. Where misery never comes. Assent, accept it. 964

CHO. I do assent. What honour now awaits me ?

MIN. That, without thee, no house shall rise to glory.

CHO. Wilt thou do this, advance my honour thus ?

MIN. Him that reveres thee shall my power protect.

CHO. And shall thy word stand unimpair'd by time ?

MIN. It is not mine to violate my faith. 970

CHO. Thy words have almost soothed me to a calm,

And the high storm of anger dies away.



**MIN.** The charms of friendship here shalt thou enjoy.

**CHO.** Say, with what strains shall I salute this land?

**MIN.** Such as, allied to conquest, from the earth,  
 From the rich dews of ocean, from the sky, 976  
 Soft-temper'd with the genial sun, may wake  
 Ambrosial gales diffusing o'er this earth  
 Luxuriance to its fruits, and to its flocks  
 Prolific vigour, to its peopled towns 980  
 The unfading glow of health. Be this thy charge ;  
 Mine, in the glorious toils of war to grace  
 Their fame-ennobled arms with victory.

**CHORUS.**

Goddess, here thy seat I share,  
 Hostile to this town no more ; 985  
 Which the dreadful god of war,  
 And the Thund'rer's sovereign power,

Give the pride of Greece to rise  
 Guardian of the rites divine,  
 Glory of the fav'ring skies, 990  
 Give to watch o'er freedom's shrine.

I too breathe the potent prayer :  
 May the sun's ambrosial ray,  
 Rolling o'er the fruitful year,  
 All its richest charms display ! 995

**MIN.** For my loved city with a willing mind  
 This do I, seating here these awful powers  
 That yield with much reluctance ; for o'er man  
 The Fates assign them a despotic sway :  
 And he that feels their terrors often knows not 1000  
 Whence springs the vengeful wrath, whose iron  
 scourge

Imbitters life ; for the sire's long-pass'd crimes  
 Draw to their chast'ning hand the suff'ring son ;  
 And, mid his thoughts of greatness, silent ruin  
 With ruthless hate pursues, and crushes him. 1005

## CHORUS.

O'er their saplings spreading fair  
 May no chill wind noxious blow;  
 Nor the dry and scorching air  
 Singe their fresh buds' opening glow.  
 For my sake may no disease 1010  
 Sicken o'er the blasted year :  
 May their teeming flocks increase,  
 And a double offspring bear.  
 'Gainst the solemn festal day  
 Numerous may their herds arise ; 1015  
 Sportive o'er the rich fields play,  
 Gift of the propitious skies.

MIN. Hear this, ye guardians of the state, and  
 know

Her word shall be accomplish'd ; for the gods 1019  
 That tread the spangled skies, and those that hold,  
 In the dark realms beneath their solemn thrones,  
 Revere her awful power ; and her high strains  
 To mortal man in accents dread pronounce  
 Blessings to some, to some a life of woes.

## CHORUS.

May no harsh untimely doom 1025  
 Sweep the manly youth away ;  
 May the virgins' ripening bloom  
 Crown with love the bridal day.  
 You, that to the Fates allied,  
 Claim this just and ample power : 1030  
 You, that o'er each house preside,  
 Sovereign rulers of each hour ;  
 Goddesses, with holy dread  
 Whose high state mankind revere,  
 Here your softest influence shed, 1035  
 Here extend your guardian care.

IN. This ready zeal accorded to my country  
 Delights me ; and with ardour must I love  
 Gentle persuasion, that hath tuned my voice

A A

To move them from their stern and fierce resolves.  
 The pleading voice of Jove hath here prevail'd ; 1041  
 And my warm efforts in the cause of mercy  
 Extend their triumph through all future time.

## CHORUS.

Ne'er may Discord's hideous power  
 Here unsated stalk its round : 1045  
 Slaughter ne'er with kindred gore  
 Madly drench the thirsty ground ;  
 While Revenge in barb'rous pride  
 Shakes the streets with thund'ring tread,  
 Blood for blood demands, and wide 1050  
 Joys the mutual rage to spread.  
 But to Union's soft command  
 May their minds harmonious move ;  
 Leagued in war, a friendly band ;  
 Tuned in peace to social love. 1055

MIN. So the mild accents of the soothing tongue,  
 Attuned by wisdom, win their easy way ;  
 And to this people from these horrid forms  
 I see much good. With gentle courtesy  
 Their courtesy requiting, always own'd 1060  
 By acts of highest reverence, you, whose care  
 Is watchful o'er this country and this seat  
 Of justice, all shall reap the meed of glory.

## CHORUS.

Hail, with wealth, with glory graced,  
 Citizens of Athens, hail ! 1065  
 Next to Jove in glory placed,  
 Never may your honours fail !  
 Train'd to wisdom's sober lore,  
 Favour'd with Minerva's love,  
 Guarded by her virgin power, 1070  
 Dear through her to sovereign Jove.

MIN. And you, all hail ! But be it mine to show  
 The place assign'd you for your residence.  
 Go to those sacred flames, they will conduct you.

And from these hallow'd victims sink with speed  
 To the dark shades below ; imprison there 1076  
 Whate'er is noxious to these realms ; whate'er  
 Has influence to bless them, send in triumph.  
 And you, high-lineaged guardians of the state,  
 Attend these stranger-guests to their new seats,  
 And be each gentle thought attuned to good. 1081

## CHORUS.

Once more hail, and hail again,  
 All that here have fix'd your seat ;  
 Mortal and immortal train,  
 Guardians of Minerva's state ! 1085

Here your residence I share.  
 To my power due homage pay,  
 Ne'er shall wo or sullen care  
 Cloud with grief life's golden day. 1089

MIN. I like these votive measures ; and will send  
 The bright flames of these splendour-shedding  
 torches,  
 With those that guard my hallow'd image here,  
 Attendant on you to the dark abodes  
 Beneath the earth. And let the Athenian train,  
 The grace, the glory of the wide-stretch'd world, 1095  
 Their manly youth, their virgins' roseate bloom,  
 And their age-honoured matrons, now advance,  
 Array'd in richest vesture darting round  
 Its vermeil-tinctured radiance ; let the torches 1099  
 Blaze, that this sable troop through future times  
 May shine conspicuous for their friendly aid

## ATTENDANT TRAIN.

Remove then from this hallow'd fane,  
 Daughters of Night, remove your virgin train :  
 With festal pomp, and solemn tread,  
 Reverent your awe-commanding state we lead. 1105  
 Breathing blessings o'er this land  
 Seek your ancient caves below,  
 Leading Fortune in your hand,  
 Breathing blessings as you go.

For you the altars rise, the victims bleed, 1110  
And sacred honours are decreed ;  
For you the rich libations dew the ground,  
While torches spread their blaze around.  
Go, in your glory then rejoicing, go ;  
Go, and lead the Fates along, 1115  
Joining in this votive song ;  
While on this city from his throne on high  
Jove propitious bends his eye.  
Go then ; and as you move your friendly train,  
Responsive to this warbled strain 1120  
Harmonious bid your swelling voices flow.

# THE PERSIANS.

**DRAMATIS PERSONÆ**

**ATOSSA,**

**MESSENGER,**

**GHOST OF DARIUS,**

**XERXES,**

**CHORUS, the Council of State.**

# THE PERSIANS.

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## ARGUMENT.

A MESSENGER arrives at the Persian capital, who communicates to Atossa, the mother of Xerxes, and the council of state deputed by the monarch to govern during his absence, the total overthrow of their fleet at the fatal battle of Salamis—In order to avert the calamities impending over the country, the ghost of Darius is evoked from the shades, to warn his former subjects of the insecurity of their dominions so long as they continue their hostile attempts against Greece—The unfortunate Xerxes soon after arrives at Susa, where he enjoins public lamentations to be made for the defeat which he has experienced.

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## CHORUS.

WHILE o'er the fields of Greece the embattled troops  
Of Persia march with delegated sway,  
We o'er their rich and gold-abounding seats  
Hold faithful our firm guard ; to this high charge  
Xerxes, our royal lord, the imperial son 5  
Of great Darius, chose our honour'd age.  
But for the king's return, and his arm'd host  
Blazing with gold, my soul presaging ill  
Swell in my tortured breast : for all her force  
Hath Asia sent, and for her youth I sigh. 10  
Nor messenger arrives, nor horseman spurs  
With tidings to this seat of Persia's kings.  
The gates of Susa and Ecbatana  
Pour'd forth their martial trains ; and Cissia sees  
Her ancient towers forsaken, while her youth, 15  
Some on the bounding steed, the tall bark some



Ascending, some with painful march on foot,  
Haste on, to arrange the deep'ning files of war.  
Amistres, Artaphernes, and the might  
Of great Astaspes, Megabazes bold, 20  
Chieftains of Persia, kings, that, to the power  
Of the great king obedient, march with these  
Leading their martial thousands; their proud steeds  
Prance under them; steel bows and shafts their arms,  
Dreadful to see, and terrible in fight, 25  
Deliberate valour breathing in their souls.  
Artembares, that in his fiery horse  
Delights; Masistres; and Imæus bold,  
Bending with manly strength his stubborn bow;  
Pharandaces, and Sosthanes, that drives 30  
With military pomp his rapid steeds.  
Others the vast prolific Nile hath sent;  
Pegastagon, that from Ægyptus draws  
His high birth; Susiscanes; and the chief  
That reigns o'er sacred Memphis, great Arsames; 35  
And Ariomardus, that o'er ancient Thebes  
Bears the supreme dominion; and with these,  
Drawn from their watery marshes, numbers train'd  
To the stout oar. Next these the Lycian troops,  
Soft sons of luxury; and those that dwell 40  
Amid the inland forests, from the sea  
Far distant; these Metragathes commands,  
And virtuous Arceus, royal chiefs, that shine  
In burnish'd gold, and many a whirling car  
Drawn by six generous steeds from Sardis lead, 45  
A glorious and a dreadful spectacle,  
And from the foot of Tmolus, sacred mount,  
Eager to bind on Greece the servile yoke,  
Mardon and Tharybis the massy spear  
Grasp with unwearied vigour; the light lance 50  
The Mysians shake. A mingled multitude  
Swept from her wide dominions skill'd to draw  
The unerring bow, in ships Euphrates sends  
From golden Babylon. With falchions arm'd  
From all the extent of Asia move the hosts 55

Obedient to their monarch's stern command.  
 Thus march'd the flower of Persia, whose loved  
     youth  
 The world of Asia nourish'd, and with sighs  
 Laments their absence; many an anxious look  
 Their wives, their parents send, count the slow  
     days, 60  
 And tremble at the long-protracted time.

## STROPHE I.

Already o'er the adverse strand  
 In arms the monarch's martial squadrons spread;  
     The threat'ning ruin shakes the land,  
 And each tall city bows its tower'd head. 65  
     Bark bound to bark, their wondrous way  
     They bridge across the indignant sea;  
 The narrow Hellespont's vex'd waves disdain,  
 His proud neck taught to wear the chain.  
 Now has the peopled Asia's warlike lord, 70  
     By land, by sea, with foot, with horse,  
     Resistless in his rapid course,  
 O'er all their realms his warring thousands  
     pour'd;  
 Now his intrepid chiefs surveys,  
 And glitt'ring like a god his radiant state displays.

## ANTISTROPHE I.

Fierce as the dragon scaled in gold 76  
 Through the deep files he darts his glowing eye;  
     And pleased their order to behold,  
 His gorgeous standard blazing to the sky,  
     Rolls onward his Assyrian car, 80  
     Directs the thunder of the war,  
 Bids the wing'd arrows' iron storm advance  
     Against the slow and cumbrous lance.  
 What shall withstand the torrent of his sway  
     When dreadful o'er the yielding shores 85  
     The impetuous tide of battle roars,  
 And sweeps the weak opposing mounds away?  
     So Persia, with resistless might,  
 Rolls her unnumber'd hosts of heroes to the fight.  
 Æsch.—D d

## STROPHE II.

For when misfortune's fraudulent hand 90  
 Prepares to pour the vengeance of the sky,  
 What mortal shall her force withstand?  
 What rapid speed the impending fury fly?  
 Gentle at first with flatt'ring smiles  
 She spreads her soft enchanting wiles, 95  
 So to her toils allures her destined prey,  
 Whence man ne'er breaks unhurt away.  
 For thus from ancient times the Fates ordain  
 That Persia's sons should greatly dare,  
 Unequall'd in the works of war; 100  
 Shake with their thund'ring steeds the ensanguined  
 plain,  
 Dreadful the hostile walls surround,  
 And lay their rampired towers in ruins on the ground.

## ANTISTROPHE II.

Taught to behold with fearless eyes  
 The whitening billows foam beneath the gale, 105  
 They bid the naval forests rise,  
 Mount the slight bark, unfurl the flying sail,  
 And o'er the angry ocean bear  
 To distant realms the storm of war.  
 For this with many a sad and gloomy thought 110  
 My tortured breast is fraught:  
 Ah me! for Persia's absent sons I sigh;  
 For while in foreign fields they fight,  
 Our towns exposed to wild affright  
 An easy prey to the invader lie: 115  
 Where, mighty Susa, where thy powers,  
 To wield the warrior's arms, and guard thy regal  
 towers!

## EPODE.

Crush'd beneath the assailing foe  
 Her golden head must Cissia bend;  
 While her pale virgins, frantic with despair, 120  
 Through all her streets awake the voice of wo;  
 And flying with their bosoms bare,  
 Their purpled stoles in anguish rend:

For all her youth in martial pride,  
 Like bees that, clust'ring round their king, 125  
 Their dark imbodied squadrons bring,  
 Attend their sceptred monarch's side,  
 And stretch across the watery way  
 From shore to shore their long array.  
 The Persian dames, with many a tender fear, 130  
 In grief's sad vigils keep the midnight hour ;  
 Shed on the widow'd couch the streaming tear,  
 And the long absence of their loves deplore.  
 Each lonely matron feels her pensive breast  
 Throb with desire, with aching fondness glow, 135  
 Since in bright arms her daring warrior dress'd  
 Left her to languish in her love-lorn wo.

Now, ye grave Persians, that your honour'd seats  
 Hold in this ancient house, with prudent care  
 And deep deliberation, so the state 140  
 Requires, consult we, pond'ring the event  
 Of this great war, which our imperial lord,  
 The mighty Xerxes from Darius sprung,  
 The stream of whose rich blood flows in our veins,  
 Leads against Greece ; whether his arrowy shower  
 Shot from the strong-braced bow, or the huge  
 spear 146  
 High brandish'd, in the deathful field prevails.  
 But see, the monarch's mother : like the gods  
 Her lustre blazes on our eyes : my queen,  
 Prostrate I fall before her : all advance 150  
 With reverence, and in duteous phrase address her.

## ATOSSA, CHORUS.

CHO. Hail, queen, of Persia's high-zoned dames  
 supreme,  
 Age-honour'd mother of the potent Xerxes.  
 Imperial consort of Darius, hail !  
 The wife, the mother of the Persians' god, 155  
 If yet our former glories fade not from us.  
 ATOS. And therefore am I come, leaving my house

That shines with gorgeous ornaments and gold,  
 Where in past days Darius held with me  
 His royal residence. With anxious care 160  
 My heart is tortured: I will tell you, friends,  
 My thoughts, not otherwise devoid of fear,  
 Lest mighty wealth with haughty foot o'erturn  
 And trample in the dust that happiness,  
 Which, not unblest'd by Heaven, Darius raised. 165  
 For this with double force unquiet thoughts  
 Past utterance fill my soul; that neither wealth  
 With all its golden stores, where men are wanting,  
 Claims reverence; nor the light, that beams from  
 power,

Shines on the man whom wealth disdains to grace.  
 The golden stores of wealth indeed are ours; 171  
 But for the light (such in the house I deem  
 The presence of its lord) there I have fears.  
 Advise me then, you whose experienced age  
 Supports the state of Persia: prudence guides 175  
 Your councils, always kind and faithful to me.

СНО. Speak, royal lady, what thy will, assured  
 We want no second bidding, where our power  
 In word or deed waits on our zeal: our hearts  
 In this with honest duty shall obey thee. 180

ΑΤΟΣ. Oft, since my son hath march'd his mighty  
 host

Against the Ionians, warring to subdue  
 Their country, have my slumbers been disturb'd  
 With dreams of dread portent; but most last night,  
 With marks of plainest proof. I'll tell thee then:  
 Methought two women stood before my eyes 186  
 Gorgeously vested, one in Persian robes  
 Adorn'd, the other in the Doric garb.  
 With more than mortal majesty they moved,  
 Of peerless beauty; sisters too they seem'd, 190  
 Though distant each from each they chanced to  
 dwell,

In Greece the one, on the barbaric coast  
 The other. 'Twixt them soon dissension rose:

My son then hasted to compose their strife,  
 Soothed them to fair accord, beneath his car 195  
 Yokes them, and reins their harness'd necks. The  
 one,

Exulting in her rich array, with pride  
 Arching her stately neck, obey'd the reins ;  
 The other with indignant fury spurn'd  
 The car, and dash'd it piecemeal, rent the reins, 200  
 And tore the yoke asunder ; down my son  
 Fell from the seat, and instant at his side  
 His father stands, Darius, at his fall  
 Impress'd with pity : him when Xerxes saw,  
 Glowing with grief and shame he rends his robes.  
 This was the dreadful vision of the night. 206

When I arose, in the sweet-flowing stream  
 I bathed my hands, and on the incensed altars  
 Presenting my oblations to the gods  
 To avert these ills, an eagle I behold 210

Fly to the altar of the sun ; aghast  
 I stood, my friends, and speechless ; when a hawk  
 With eager speed runs thither, furious cuffs  
 The eagle with his wings, and with his talons  
 Unplumes his head ; meantime the imperial bird 215  
 Cowers to the blows defenceless. Dreadful this  
 To me that saw it, and to you that hear.

My son, let conquest crown his arms, would shine  
 With dazzling glory ; but should Fortune frown,  
 The state indeed presumes not to arraign 220  
 His sovereignty ; yet how, his honour lost,  
 How shall he sway the sceptre of this land ?

Сно. We would not, royal lady, sink thy soul  
 With fear in the excess, nor raise it high  
 With confidence. Go then, address the gods ; 225  
 If thou hast seen aught ill, entreat their power  
 To avert that ill, and perfect ev'ry good  
 To thee, thy sons, the state, and all thy friends.  
 Then to the earth, and to the mighty dead  
 Behooves thee pour libations ; gently call 230

Him that was once thy husband, whom thou saw'st  
In visions of the night ; entreat his shade  
From the deep realms beneath to send to light  
Triumph to thee and to thy son ; whate'er  
Bears other import, to inwrap, to hide it 235  
Close in the covering earth's profoundest gloom.  
This, in the presage of my thoughts that flow  
Benevolent to thee, have I proposed ;  
And all, we trust, shall be successful to thee.

ATOS. Thy friendly judgment first hath placed  
these dreams 240

In a fair light, confirming the event  
Benevolent to my son and to my house.  
May all the good be ratified ! These rites  
Shall, at thy bidding, to the powers of heaven,  
And to the manes of our friends, be paid 245  
In order meet, when I return ; meanwhile  
Indulge me, friends, who wish to be inform'd  
Where, in what clime, the towers of Athens rise.

CHO. Far in the west, where sets the imperial sun.

ATOS. Yet my son will'd the conquest of this town.

CHO. May Greece through all her states bend to  
his power ! 251

ATOS. Send thy embattled numbers to the field ?

CHO. A force that to the Medes hath wrought  
much wo.

ATOS. Have they sufficient treasures in their  
houses ?

CHO. Their rich earth yields a copious fount of  
silver. 255

ATOS. From the strong bow wing they the barbed  
shaft ?

CHO. They grasp the stout spear, and the massy  
shield.

ATOS. What monarch reigns, whose power com-  
mands their ranks ?

CHO. Slaves to no lord, they own no kingly power.

255 This alludes to their rich silver mines.

**ATOS.** How can they then resist the invading foe ?

**CHO.** As to spread havoc through the numerous  
host, 261

That round Darius form'd their glitt'ring files.

**ATOS.** Thy words strike deep, and wound the pa-  
rent's breast

Whose sons are march'd to such a dangerous field.

**CHO.** But, if I judge aright, thou soon shalt hear 265  
Each circumstance ; for this way, mark him, speeds  
A Persian messenger ; he bears, be sure,  
Tidings of high import, or good or ill.

**ATOSSA, CHORUS, MESSENGER.**

**MES.** Wo to the towns through Asia's peopled  
realms !

Wo to the land of Persia, once the port 270

Of boundless wealth, how is thy glorious state

Vanish'd at once, and all thy spreading honours

Fall'n, lost ! Ah me ! unhappy is his task

That bears unhappy tidings : but constraint

Compels me to relate this tale of wo. 275

Persians, the whole barbaric host is fall'n.

**CHO.** O horror, horror ! What a baleful train

Of recent ills ! Ah, Persians, as he speaks

Of ruin, let your tears stream to the earth.

**MES.** It is ev'n so, all ruin ; and myself, 280

Beyond all hope returning, view this light.

**CHO.** How tedious and oppressive is the weight

Of age, reserved to hear these hopeless ills !

**MES.** I speak not from report ; but these mine  
eyes

Beheld the ruin which my tongue would utter. 285

**CHO.** Wo, wo is me ! Then has the iron storm,

That darken'd from the realms of Asia, pour'd

In vain its arrowy shower on sacred Greece.

**MES.** In heaps the unhappy dead lie on the strand

Of Salamis, and all the neighbouring shores. 290

**CHO.** Unhappy friends, sunk, perish'd in the sea ;

Their bodies, mid the wreck of shatter'd ships,

Mangled, and rolling on the encumber'd waves !



MES. Naught did their bows avail, but all the  
troops

In the first conflict of the ships were lost. 295

CHO. Raise the funereal cry, with dismal notes  
Wailing the wretched Persians. Oh, how ill

They plann'd their measures, all their army perish'd!

MES. O Salamis, how hateful is thy name! 299  
And groans burst from me when I think of Athens.

CHO. How dreadful to her foes! Call to remem-  
brance

How many Persian dames, wedded in vain,  
Hath Athens of their noble husbands widow'd!

AROS. Astonied with these ills, my voice thus long  
Hath wanted utterance: griefs like these exceed 305  
The power of speech or question: yet ev'n such,  
Inflicted by the gods, must mortal man  
Constrain'd by hard necessity endure.

But tell me all, without distraction tell me,  
All this calamity, though many a groan 310  
Burst from thy labouring heart. Who is not fallen?  
What leader must we wail? What sceptred chief  
Dying hath left his troops without a lord?

MES. Xerxes himself lives, and beholds the light.

AROS. That word beams comfort on my house, a  
ray 315

That brightens through the melancholy gloom.

MES. Artembares, the potent chief that led  
Ten thousand horse, lies slaughtered on the rocks  
Of rough Sileniæ. The great Dadaces,  
Beneath whose standard march'd a thousand horse,  
Pierced by a spear, fell headlong from the ship. 321  
Tenagon, bravest of the Bactrians, lies  
Roll'd on the wave-worn beach of Ajax' isle.  
Lilæus, Arsames, Argestes, dash  
With violence in death against the rocks 325  
Where nest the silver doves. Arcteus, that dwelt  
Near to the fountains of the Egyptian Nile,

326 Salamis was the birthplace of Ajax, and sacred to Venus;  
hence it was said to abound with doves



Adeues, and Pheresba, and Pharnuchus  
 Fell from one ship. Matallus, Chrysa's chief,  
 That led his dark'ning squadrons, thrice ten thousand,  
 On jet-black steeds, with purple gore distain'd 331  
 The yellow of his thick and shaggy beard.  
 The Magian Arabus, and Artames  
 From Bactra, mould'ring on the dreary shore  
 Lie low. Amistris, and Amphistreus there 335  
 Grasps his war-wearied spear; there prostrate lies  
 The illustrious Ariomardus; long his loss  
 Shall Sardis weep: thy Mysian Sisames,  
 And Tharybis, that o'er the burden'd deep  
 Led five times fifty vessels; Lerna gave 340  
 The hero birth, and manly grace adorn'd  
 His pleasing form, but low in death he lies  
 Unhappy in his fate. Syennesis,  
 Cilicia's warlike chief, who dared to front  
 The foremost dangers, singly to the foes 345  
 A terror, there too found a glorious death.  
 These chieftains to my sad remembrance rise,  
 Relating but a few of many ills.

Aros. This is the height of ill, ah me! and shame  
 To Persia, grief, and lamentation loud. 350  
 But tell me this, afresh renew thy tale:  
 What was the number of the Grecian fleet,  
 That in fierce conflict their bold barks should dare  
 Rush to encounter with the Persian hosts.

Mrs. Know then, in numbers the barbaric fleet  
 Was far superior: in ten squadrons, each 356  
 Of thirty ships, Greece plough'd the deep; of these  
 One held a distant station. Xerxes led  
 A thousand ships; their number well I know;  
 Two hundred more, and seven, that swept the  
 seas 360

With speediest sail: this was their full amount.  
 And in the engagement seem'd we not secure  
 Of victory! But unequal fortune sunk  
 Our scale in fight, discomfiting our host.

Aros. The gods preserve the city of Minerva. 365

B B

MES. The walls of Athens are impregnable,  
Their firmest bulwarks her heroic sons.

AROS. Which navy first advanced to the attack ?  
Who led to the onset, tell me ; the bold Greeks,  
Or, glorying in his numerous fleet, my son ? 370

MES. Our evil genius, lady, or some god  
Hostile to Persia, led to ev'ry ill.

Forth from the troops of Athens came a Greek,  
And thus address'd thy son, the imperial Xerxes :—  
“ Soon as the shades of night descend, the Grecians  
Shall quit their station ; rushing to their oars 376  
They mean to separate, and in secret flight  
Seek safety.” At these words, the royal chief,

Little conceiving of the wiles of Greece  
And gods averse, to all the naval leaders 380  
Gave his high charge :—“ Soon as yon sun shall cease

To dart his radiant beams, and dark'ning night  
Ascends the temple of the sky, arrange  
In three divisions your well-ordered ships,  
And guard each pass, each outlet of the seas : 385

Others enring around this rocky isle  
Of Salamis. Should Greece escape her fate,  
And work her way by secret flight, your heads  
Shall answer the neglect.” This harsh command  
He gave, exulting in his mind, nor knew 390

What Fate design'd. With martial discipline  
And prompt obedience, snatching a repast,  
Each mariner fix'd well his ready oar.

Soon as the golden sun was set, and night  
Advanced, each train'd to ply the dashing oar, 395  
Assumed his seat ; in arms each warrior stood,

Troop cheering troop through all the ships of war.  
Each to the appointed station steers his course ;  
And through the night his naval force each chief

Fix'd to secure the passes. Night advanced, 400  
But not by secret flight did Greece attempt  
To escape. The morn, all beauteous to behold,

Drawn by white steeds bounds o'er the enlighten'd  
earth ;

At once from ev'ry Greek with glad acclaim  
Burst forth the song of war, whose lofty notes 405  
The echo of the island rocks return'd,  
Spreading dismay through Persia's hosts, thus fallen  
From their high hopes ; no flight this solemn strain  
Portended, but deliberate valour bent  
On daring battle ; while the trumpet's sound 410  
Kindled the flames of war. But when their oars  
The pæan ended, with impetuous force  
Dash'd the resounding surges, instant all  
Rush'd on in view : in orderly array  
The squadron on the right first led, behind 415  
Rode their whole fleet ; and now distinct we heard  
From ev'ry part this voice of exhortation :—  
“ Advance, ye sons of Greece, from thralldom save  
Your country, save your wives, your children save,  
The temples of your gods, the sacred tomb 420  
Where rest your honour'd ancestors ; this day  
The common cause of all demands your valour.”  
Meantime from Persia's hosts the deep'ning shout  
Answer'd their shout ; no time for cold delay ;  
But ship 'gainst ship its brazen beak impell'd. 425  
First to the charge a Grecian galley rush'd ;  
Ill the Phœnician bore the rough attack,  
Its sculptured prow all shatter'd. Each advanced  
Daring an opposite. The deep array  
Of Persia at the first sustain'd the encounter ; 430  
But their throng'd numbers, in the narrow seas  
Confined, want room for action ; and, deprived  
Of mutual aid, beaks clash with beaks, and each  
Breaks all the other's oars : with skill disposed  
The Grecian navy circled them around 435  
With fierce assault ; and rushing from its height  
The inverted vessel sinks : the sea no more  
Wears its accustomed aspect, with foul wrecks  
And blood disfigured ; floating carcasses  
Roll on the rocky shores : the poor remains 440  
Of the barbaric armament to flight  
Ply every oar inglorious : onward rush  
The Greeks amid the ruins of the fleet,

As through a shoal of fish caught in the net,  
 Spreading destruction: the wide ocean o'er 443  
 Wailings are heard, and loud laments, till night  
 With darkness on her brow brought grateful truce.  
 Should I recount each circumstance of wo,  
 Ten times on my unfinished tale the sun  
 Would set ; for be assured that not one day 450  
 Could close the ruin of so vast a host.

Aros. Ah, what a boundless sea of wo hath burst  
 On Persia, and the whole barbaric race !

MES. These are not half, not half our ills ; on these  
 Came an assemblage of calamities, 455  
 That sunk us with a double weight of wo.

Aros. What fortune can be more unfriendly to us  
 Than this ? Say on, what dread calamity  
 Sunk Persia's host with greater weight of wo.

MES. Whoe'er of Persia's warriors glow'd in prime  
 Of vig'rous youth, or felt their generous souls 461  
 Expand with courage, or for noble birth  
 Shone with distinguish'd lustre, or excell'd  
 In firm and duteous loyalty, all these  
 Are fall'n, ignobly, miserably fall'n. 465

Aros. Alas, their ruthless fate, unhappy friends !  
 But in what manner, tell me, did they perish ?

MES. Full against Salamis an isle arises,  
 Of small circumference, to the anchor'd bark  
 Unfaithful ; on the promontory's brow, 470  
 That overlooks the sea, Pan loves to lead  
 The dance : to this the monarch sends these chiefs,  
 That when the Grecians from their shatter'd ships  
 Should here seek shelter, these might hew them  
 down

An easy conquest, and secure the strand 475  
 To their sea-wearied friends ; ill judging what  
 The event : but when the fav'ring god to Greece  
 Gave the proud glory of this naval fight,  
 Instant in all their glitt'ring arms they leap'd

468 Psyttaleia, a rough uncultivated rock between Salamis  
 and the continent. Pan is always represented as delighting in  
 such places

From their light ships, and all the island round 480  
 Encompass'd, that our bravest stood dismay'd ;  
 While broken rocks, whirl'd with tempestuous force,  
 And storms of arrows crush'd them ; then the Greeks  
 Rush to the attack at once, and furious spread  
 The carnage, till each mangled Persian fell. 485  
 Deep were the groans of Xerxes when he saw  
 This havoc ; for his seat, a lofty mound  
 Commanding the wide sea, o'erlook'd his hosts.  
 With rueful cries he rent his royal robes,  
 And through his troops embattled on the shore 490  
 Gave signal of retreat ; then started wild,  
 And fled disorder'd. To the former ills  
 These are fresh miseries to awake thy sighs.

Atos. Invidious Fortune, how thy baleful power  
 Hath sunk the hopes of Persia ! Bitter fruit 495  
 My son hath tasted from his purposed vengeance  
 On Athens, famed for arms ; the fatal field  
 Of Marathon, red with barbaric blood,  
 Sufficed not ; that defeat he thought to avenge,  
 And pull'd this hideous ruin on his head. 500  
 But tell me, if thou canst, where didst thou leave  
 The ships that happily escaped the wreck ?

Mes. The poor remains of Persia's scatter'd fleet  
 Spread ev'ry sail for flight, as the wind drives,  
 In wild disorder ; and on land no less 505  
 The ruin'd army ; in Bœotia some,  
 With thirst oppress'd, at Crene's cheerful rills  
 Were lost ; forespent with breathless speed some  
 pass  
 The fields of Phocis, some the Doric plain,  
 And near the gulf of Melia, the rich vale 510  
 Through which Sperchius rolls his friendly stream.  
 Achaia thence and the Thessalian state  
 Received our famish'd train ; the greater part

488 Xerxes viewed this fight from Ægialus, a mountain on the opposite shore ; the silver chair on which he sat was afterward placed in the temple of Minerva in Athens, and dedicated to that goddess, as was the golden-hilted scimitar of Mardonius.

Through thirst and hunger perish'd there, oppress'd  
 At once by both: but we our painful steps 515  
 Held onwards to Magnesia, and the land  
 Of Macedonia, o'er the ford of Axios,  
 And Bolbe's sedgy marshes, and the heights  
 Of steep Pangæos, to the realms of Thrace.  
 That night, ere yet the season, breathing frore, 520  
 Rush'd winter, and with ice incrust'd o'er  
 The flood of sacred Strymon: such as own'd  
 No god till now, awe-struck, with many a prayer  
 Adored the earth and sky. When now the troops  
 Had ceased their invocations to the gods, 525  
 O'er the stream's solid crystal they began  
 Their march; and we, who took our early way,  
 Ere the sun darted his warm beams, pass'd safe:  
 But when his burning orb with fiery rays  
 Unbound the middle current, down they sunk 530  
 Each over other; happiest he who found  
 The speediest death: the poor remains, that 'scaped,  
 With pain through Thrace dragg'd on their toilsome  
 march,

A feeble few, and reach'd their native soil;  
 That Persia sighs through all her states, and mourns  
 Her dearest youth. This is no feigned tale: 536  
 But many of the ills, that burst upon us  
 In dreadful vengeance, I refrain to utter.

CHO. O Fortune, heavy with affliction's load,  
 How hath thy foot crush'd all the Persian race! 540

ATOS. Ah me, what sorrows for our ruin'd host  
 Oppress my soul! Ye visions of the night  
 Haunting my dreams, how plainly did you show  
 These ills!—You set them in too fair a light.  
 Yet, since your bidding hath in this prevail'd, 545  
 First to the gods wish I to pour my prayers,  
 Then to the mighty dead present my off'rings,  
 Bringing libations from my house: too late,  
 I know, to change the past; yet for the future,  
 If haply better fortune may await it, 550  
 Behooves you, on this sad event, to guide

Your friends with faithful counsels. Should my son  
 Return ere I have finish'd, let your voice  
 Speak comfort to him ; friendly to his house  
 Attend him, nor let sorrow rise on sorrows. 555

## CHORUS.

## STROPHE.

Awful sovereign of the skies,  
 When now o'er Persia's numerous host  
 Thou badest the storm with ruin rise,  
 All her proud vaunts of glory lost,  
 Ecbatana's imperial head 560  
 By thee was wrapp'd in sorrow's dark'ning shade ;  
 Through Susa's palaces with loud lament,  
 By their soft hands their veils all rent,  
 The copious tear the virgins pour,  
 That trickles their bare bosoms o'er. 565  
 From her sweet couch up starts the widow'd bride,  
 Her lord's loved image rushing on her soul,  
 Throws the rich ornaments of youth aside,  
 And gives her griefs to flow without control :  
 Her griefs not causeless ; for the mighty slain 570  
 Our melting tears demand, and sorrow-soften'd  
 strain.

## ANTISTROPHE.

Now her wailings wide despair  
 Pours these exhausted regions o'er :  
 Xerxes, ill-fated, led the war ;  
 Xerxes, ill-fated, leads no more ; 575  
 Xerxes sent forth the unwise command,  
 The crowded ships unpeopled all the land ;  
 That land, o'er which Darius held his reign,  
 Courting the arts of peace, in vain,  
 O'er all his grateful realms adored, 580  
 The stately Susa's gentle lord.  
 Black o'er the waves his burden'd vessels sweep,  
 For Greece elate the warlike squadrons fly ;  
 Now crush'd, and whelm'd beneath the indignant deep  
 The shatter'd wrecks and lifeless heroes lie : 585



While, from the arms of Greece escaped, with toil  
The unshelter'd monarch roams o'er Thracia's  
dreary soil.

## EPODE.

The first in battle slain  
By Cychrea's craggy shore  
Through sad constraint, ah me ! forsaken lie, 590  
All pale and smear'd with gore :—

Raise high the mournful strain,  
And let the voice of anguish pierce the sky :—  
Or roll beneath the roaring tide,  
By monsters rent of touch abhorr'd ; 595  
While through the widow'd mansion echoing wide  
Sounds the deep groan, and wails its slaughter'd  
lord :

Pale with his fears the helpless orphan there  
Gives the full stream of plaintive grief to flow ;  
While age its hoary head in deep despair 600  
Bends, list'ning to the shrieks of wo.

With sacred awe  
The Persian law  
No more shall Asia's realms revere ;  
To their lord's hand 605  
At his command,

No more the exacted tribute bear.  
Who now falls prostrate at the monarch's throne !  
His regal greatness is no more.  
Now no restraint the wanton tongue shall own, 610  
Free from the golden curb of power ;  
For on the rocks, wash'd by the beating flood,  
His awe commanding nobles lie in blood.

## ATOSSA, CHORUS.

ATOS. Whoe'er, my friends, in the rough stream  
of life  
Hath struggled with affliction, thence is taught 615  
That, when the flood begins to swell, the heart  
Fondly fears all things ; when the fav'ring gale  
Of Fortune smooths the current, it expands  
With unsuspecting confidence, and deems

That gale shall always breathe. So to my eyes 620  
 All things now wear a formidable shape,  
 And threaten from the gods: my ears are pierced  
 With sounds far other than of song. Such ills  
 Dismay my sick'ning soul: hence from my house  
 Nor glitt'ring car attends me, nor the train 625  
 Of wonted state, while I return, and bear  
 Libations soothing to the father's shade  
 In the son's cause; delicious milk, that foams  
 White from the sacred heifer; liquid honey,  
 Extract of flowers; and from its virgin fount 630  
 The running crystal; this pure draught, that flow'd  
 From the ancient vine, of power to bathe the spirits  
 In joy; the yellow olive's fragrant fruit,  
 That glories in its leaves' unfading verdure;  
 With flowers of various hues, earth's fairest off-  
 spring 635

Inwreathed. But you, my friends, amid these rites  
 Raise high your solemn warblings, and invoke  
 Your lord, divine Darius; I meanwhile  
 Will pour these off'rings to the infernal gods.

CHO. Yes, royal lady, Persia's honour'd grace, 640  
 To earth's dark chambers pour thy off'rings: we  
 With choral hymns will supplicate the powers  
 That guide the dead, to be propitious to us.  
 And you, that o'er the realms of night extend  
 Your sacred sway, thee mighty earth, and thee 645  
 Hermes; thee chief, tremendous king, whose throne  
 Awes with supreme dominion, I adjure:  
 Send, from your gloomy regions, send his shade  
 Once more to visit this ethereal light;  
 That he alone, if aught of dread event 650  
 He sees yet threat'ning Persia, may disclose  
 To us poor mortals Fate's extreme decree.

Hears the honour'd godlike king?

These barbaric notes of wo,  
 Taught in descant sad to ring, 655  
 Hears he in the shades below?

C c

Thou, O Earth, and you, that lead  
 Through your sable realms the dead,  
 Guide him as he takes his way,  
 And give him to the ethereal light of day ! 660

Let the illustrious shade arise  
 Glorious in his radiant state,  
 More than blazed before our eyes,  
 Ere sad Susa mourn'd his fate.  
 Dear he lived, his tomb is dear, 665  
 Shrining virtues we revere :  
 Send then, monarch of the dead,  
 Such as Darius was, Darius' shade.

He in realm-unpeopling war  
 Wasted not his subjects' blood, [670  
 Godlike in his will to spare,  
 In his councils wise and good.  
 Rise then, sovereign lord, to light ;  
 On this mound's sepulchral height  
 Lift thy sock in saffron died, 675  
 And rear thy rich tiara's regal pride !

Great and good, Darius, rise :  
 Lord of Persia's lord, appear :  
 Thus involved with thrilling cries  
 Come, our tale of sorrow hear ! 680  
 War her Stygian pennons spreads,  
 Brooding darkness o'er our heads ;  
 For stretch'd along the dreary shore  
 The flow'r of Asia lies distain'd with gore.

Rise, Darius, awful power ; 685  
 Long for thee our tears shall flow.  
 Why thy ruin'd empire o'er  
 Swells this double flood of wo ?  
 Sweeping o'er the azure tide  
 Rode thy navy's gallant pride : 690  
 Navy now no more, for all  
 Beneath the whelming wave——

## GHOST OF DARIUS, ATOSSA, CHORUS.

DA. Ye faithful Persians, honour'd now in age,  
 Once the companions of my youth, what ills  
 Afflict the state? The firm earth groans, it opes, 695  
 Disclosing its vast deeps; and near my tomb  
 I see my wife: this shakes my troubled soul  
 With fearful apprehensions; yet her off'rings  
 Pleased I receive. And you around my tomb  
 Chanting the lofty strain, whose solemn air 700  
 Draws forth the dead, with grief-attemper'd notes  
 Mournfully call me: not with ease the way  
 Leads to this upper air; and the stern gods,  
 Prompt to admit, yield not a passage back  
 But with reluctance: much with them my power  
 Availing, with no tardy step I come. 706  
 Say then, with what new ill doth Persia groan?

CHO. My wonted awe o'ercomes me; in thy presence  
 I dare not raise my eyes, I dare not speak.

DA. Since from the realms below, by thy sad  
 strains 710  
 Adjured, I come, speak; let thy words be brief;  
 Say whence thy grief, tell me unawed by fear.

CHO. I dread to forge a flattering tale, I dread  
 To grieve thee with a harsh offensive truth.

DA. Since fear hath chained his tongue, high-  
 honour'd dame, 715

Once my imperial consort, check thy tears,  
 Thy griefs, and speak distinctly. Mortal man  
 Must bear his lot of wo; afflictions rise  
 Many from sea, many from land, if life  
 Be haply measured through a lengthen'd course. 720

ATOS. O thou that graced with Fortune's choicest  
 gifts

Surpassing mortals, while thine eye beheld  
 Yon sun's ethereal rays, livedst like a god  
 Bless'd amid thy Persians; bless'd I deem thee now  
 In death, ere sunk in this abyss of ills, 725  
 Darius, hear at once our sum of wo;  
 Ruin through all her states hath crush'd thy Persia.

DA. By pestilence, or faction's furious storms ?

ATOS. Not so: near Athens perish'd all our troops.

DA. Say, of my sons, which led the forces thither ?

ATOS. The impetuous Xerxes, thinning all the land.

DA. By sea or land dared he this rash attempt ? 732

ATOS. By both : a double front the war presented.

DA. A host so vast what march conducted o'er ?

ATOS. From shore to shore he bridged the Hellespont. 735

DA. What ! could he chain the mighty Bosphorus ?

ATOS. Ev'n so, some god assisting his design.

DA. Some god of power to cloud his better sense.

ATOS. The event now shows what mischiefs he achieved.

DA. What suffer'd they, for whom your sorrows flow ?

ATOS. His navy sunk spreads ruin through the camp.

DA. Fell all his host beneath the slaught'ring spear ?

ATOS. Susa, through all her streets, mourns her lost sons.

DA. How vain the succour, the defence of arms ?

ATOS. In Bactra age and grief are only left. 745

DA. Ah, what a train of warlike youth is lost !

ATOS. Xerxes, astonished, desolate, alone—

DA. How will this end ? Nay, pause not. Is he safe ?

ATOS. Fled o'er the bridge, that join'd the adverse strands. 750

DA. And reach'd this shore in safety ? Is this true ?

ATOS. True are thy words, and not to be gainsay'd.

DA. With what a winged course the oracles

haste their completion ! With the lightning's speed

Jove on my son hath hurled his threaten'd vengeance :

Yet I implored the gods that it might fall 756

In time's late process : but when rashness drives

Impetuous on, the scourge of Heaven upraised

Lashes the Fury forward ; hence these ills

Pour headlong on my friends. Not weighing this,  
 My son, with all the fiery pride of youth, 760  
 Hath quickened their arrival, while he hoped  
 To bind the sacred Hellespont, to hold  
 The raging Bosphorus, like a slave, in chains,  
 And dared the advent'rous passage, bridging firm  
 With links of solid iron his wondrous way, 765  
 To lead his numerous host; and swell'd with  
 thoughts

Presumptuous, deem'd, vain mortal! that his power  
 Should rise above the gods' and Neptune's might.  
 And was not this the phrensy of the soul?  
 But much I fear lest all my treasured wealth 770  
 Fall to some daring hand an easy prey.

Aros. This from too frequent converse with bad  
 men

The impetuous Xerxes learn'd; these caught his ear  
 With thy great deeds, as winning for thy sons  
 Vast riches with thy conquering spear, while he 725  
 Tim'rous and slothful, never, save in sport,  
 Lifted his lance, nor added to the wealth  
 Won by his noble fathers. This reproach  
 Oft by bad men repeated, urged his soul  
 To attempt this war, and lead his troops to Greece.

DA. Great deeds have they achieved, and me-  
 morable 781

For ages: never hath this wasted state  
 Suffer'd such ruin, since heaven's awful king  
 Gave to one lord Asia's extended plains  
 White with innumerable flocks, and to his hands 785  
 Consign'd the imperial sceptre. Her brave hosts  
 A Mede first led; the virtues of his son  
 Fix'd firm the empire, for his temperate soul  
 Breathed prudence. Cyrus next, by fortune graced,  
 Adorn'd the throne, and bless'd his grateful friends  
 With peace: he to his mighty monarchy 791  
 Join'd Lydia, and the Phrygians; to his power  
 Ionia bent reluctant; but the gods  
 With victory his gentle virtues crown'd

His son then wore the regal diadem. 795  
 Next to disgrace his country, and to stain  
 The splendid glories of this ancient throne,  
 Rose Mardus : him, with righteous vengeance fired  
 Artaphernes, and his confederate chiefs  
 Crush'd in his palace : Maraphis assumed 800  
 The sceptre : after him Artaphernes.  
 Me next to this exalted eminence,  
 Crowning my great ambition, Fortune raised.  
 In many a glorious field my glittering spear  
 Flamed in the van of Persia's numerous hosts ; 805  
 But never wrought such ruin to the state.  
 Xerxes, my son, in all the pride of youth  
 Listens to youthful counsels, my commands  
 No more remember'd ; hence, my hoary friends,  
 Not the whole line of Persia's sceptred lords, 810  
 You know it well, so wasted her brave sons.

CHO. Why this ? To what fair end are these thy  
 words

Directed ? Sovereign lord, instruct thy Persians  
 How, mid this ruin, best to guide their state.

DA. No more 'gainst Greece lead your embattled  
 hosts ; 815

Not though your deep'ning phalanx spreads the field  
 Outnumb'ring theirs : their very earth fights for  
 them.

CHO. What may thy words import ? How fight for  
 them ?

DA. With famine it destroys your cumbrous train.

CHO. Choice levies, prompt for action, will we  
 send. 820

DA. Those, in the fields of Greece that now re-  
 main,

Shall not revisit safe the Persian shore.

CHO. What ! shall not all the host of Persia pass  
 Again from Europe o'er the Hellespont ?

DA. Of all their numbers few, if aught avails 825  
 The faith of heaven-sent oracles to him  
 That weighs the past, in their accomplishment

Not partial : hence he left, in faithless hope  
 Confiding, his selected train of heroes.  
 These have their station where Asopus flows 830  
 Wat'ring the plain, whose grateful currents roll  
 Diffusing plenty through Bœotia's fields.  
 There misery waits to crush them with the load  
 Of heaviest ills, in vengeance for their proud  
 And impious daring ; for where'er they held 835  
 Through Greece their march, they fear'd not to pro-  
 fane

The statues of the gods ; their hallow'd shrines  
 Emblazed, o'erturn'd their altars, and in ruins,  
 Rent from their firm foundations, to the ground  
 Levell'd their temples ; such their frantic deeds, 840  
 Nor less their suff'rings ; greater still await them ;  
 For Vengeance hath not wasted all her stores ;  
 The heap yet swells ; for in Plataea's plains  
 Beneath the Doric spear the clotted mass  
 Of carnage shall arise, that the high mounds, 845  
 Piled o'er the dead, to late posterity  
 Shall give this silent record to men's eyes,  
 That proud aspiring thoughts but ill beseem  
 Weak mortals : for oppression, when it springs,  
 Puts forth the blade of vengeance, and its fruit 850  
 Yields a ripe harvest of repentant wo.  
 Behold this vengeance, and remember Greece,  
 Remember Athens : henceforth let not pride,  
 Her present state disdaining, strive to grasp  
 Another's, and her treasured happiness 955  
 Shed on the ground : such insolent attempts  
 Awake the vengeance of offended Jove.  
 But you, whose age demands more temperate  
 thoughts,

With words of well-placed counsel teach his youth  
 To curb that pride, which from the gods calls down  
 Destruction on his head. And thou, whose age 861  
 The miseries of thy Xerxes sink with sorrow,  
 Go to thy house, thence choose the richest robe,  
 And meet thy son ; for through the rage of grief



His gorgeous vestments from his royal limbs      865  
 Are foully rent. With gentlest courtesy  
 Soothe his affliction ; for his duteous ear,  
 I know, will listen to thy voice alone.  
 Now to the realms of darkness I descend.      869  
 My ancient friends, farewell, and mid these ills  
 Each day in pleasures bathe your drooping spirits,  
 For treasured riches naught avail the dead.

## ATOSSA, CHORUS.

CHO. These many present, many future ills  
 Denounced on Persia, sink my soul with grief.  
 AROS. Unhappy fortune, what a tide of ills      875  
 Bursts o'er me ! Chief this foul disgrace, which  
 shows  
 My son divested of his rich attire,  
 His royal robes all rent, distracts my thoughts.  
 But I will go, choose the most gorgeous vest,  
 And haste to meet my son. Ne'er in his woes      880  
 Will I forsake whom my soul holds most dear.

## CHORUS.

## STROPHE I.

Ye powers that rule the skies,  
 Memory recalls our great, our happy fate,  
 Our well-appointed state,  
 The scenes of glory opening to our eyes,      885  
 When this vast empire o'er  
 The good Darius, with each virtue bless'd  
 That forms a monarch's breast,  
 Shielding his subjects with a father's care,  
 Invincible in war,      890  
 Extended like a god his awful power,  
 Then spread our arms their glory wide,  
 Guarding to peace her golden reign :  
 Each tower'd city saw with pride  
 Safe from the toils of war her homeward-marching  
 train.      895

## ANTISTROPHE I.

Nor Haly's shallow strand  
 He pass'd, nor from his palace moved his state ;  
 He spoke ; his word was Fate.  
 What strong-based cities could his might withstand ?  
 Not those that lift their heads 900  
 Where to the sea the floods of Strymon pass,  
 Leaving the huts of Thrace ;  
 Nor those, that far the extended ocean o'er  
 Stand girt with many a tower ;  
 Nor where the Hellespont his broad wave spreads ;  
 Nor the firm bastions' rampired might, 906  
 Whose foot the deep Propontis laves ;  
 Nor those, that glorying in their height  
 Frown o'er the Pontic sea, and shade his darken'd  
 waves.

## STROPHE II.

Each sea-girt isle around 910  
 Bow'd to this monarch : humbled Lesbos bow'd ;  
 Paros, of its marble proud ;  
 Naxos with vines, with olives Samos crown'd :  
 Him Myconus adored ;  
 Chios, the seat of beauty ; Andros steep, 915  
 That stretches o'er the deep  
 To meet the wat'ry Tenos ; him each bay  
 Bound by the Icarian sea,  
 Him Melos, Gnidus, Rhodes confess'd their lord ;  
 O'er Cyprus stretch'd his sceptred hand : 920  
 Paphos and Solos own'd his power,  
 And Salamis, whose hostile strand,  
 The cause of all our wo, is red with Persian gore.

## ANTISTROPHE II.

Ev'n the proud towns, that rear'd  
 Sublime along the Ionian coast their towers, 925  
 Where wealth her treasures pours,  
 Peopled from Greece, his prudent reign revered.  
 With such unconquer'd might  
 His hardy warriors shook the embattled fields,  
 Heroes that Persia yields, 930

And those from distant realms that took their way,  
And wedged in close array

Beneath his glitt'ring banners claim'd the fight.

But now these glories are no more :

Farewell the big war's plumed pride : 935

The gods have crush'd this trophied power ;

Sunk are our vanquish'd arms beneath the indignant  
tide.

XERXES, CHORUS.

XER. Ah me, how sudden have the storms of Fate,  
Beyond all thought, all apprehension, burst

On my devoted head ! O Fortune, Fortune ! 940

With what relentless fury hath thy hand

Hurl'd desolation on the Persian race !

Wo unsupportable ! The torturing thought

Of our lost youth comes rushing on my mind,

And sinks me to the ground. O Jove, that I 945

Had died with those brave men that died in fight !

CHO. O thou afflicted monarch, once the lord

Of marshall'd armies, of the lustre beam'd

From glory's ray o'er Persia, of her sons

The pride, the grace, whom ruin now hath sunk 950

In blood ! The unpeopled land laments her youth

By Xerxes led to slaughter, till the realms

Of death are gorged with Persians ; for the flower

Of all the realm, thousands, whose dreadful bows

With arrowy shower annoy'd the foe, are fall'n. 955

XER. Your fall, heroic youths, distracts my soul.

CHO. And Asia sinking on her knee, O king,  
Oppress'd, with griefs oppress'd, bends to the earth.

XER. And I, O wretched fortune, I was born

To crush, to desolate my ruin'd country ! 960

CHO. I have no voice, no swelling harmony,

No descant, save these notes of wo,

Harsh, and responsive to the sullen sigh,

Rude strains, that unmelodious flow,

To welcome thy return. 965

XER. Then bid them flow, bid the wild measures  
flow

Hollow, unmusical, the notes of grief;  
They suit my fortune, and dejected state.

## CHORUS.

Yes, at thy royal bidding shall the strain  
Pour the deep sorrows of my soul ; 970  
The suff'rings of my bleeding country plain,  
And bid the mournful measures roll.  
Again the voice of wild despair  
With thrilling shrieks shall pierce the air ;  
For high the god of war his flaming crest 975  
Raised, with the fleet of Greece surrounded,  
The haughty arms of Greece with conquest bless'd,  
And Persia's wither'd force confounded,  
Dash'd on the dreary beach her heroes slain,  
Or overwhelm'd them in the darken'd main. 980  
XER. To swell thy griefs ask ev'ry circumstance.

## CHORUS.

Where are thy valiant friends, thy chieftains where ?  
Pharnaces, Susas, and the might  
Of Pelagon, and Dotamas ? The spear  
Of Agabates bold in fight ? 985  
Psammis in mailed cuirass dress'd,  
And Susiscanes' glitt'ring crest ?

XER. Dash'd from the Tyrian vessel on the rocks  
Of Salamis they sunk, and smear'd with gore  
The heroes on the dreary strand are stretch'd. 990

## CHORUS.

Where is Pharnuchus ? Ariomardus where,  
With ev'ry gentle virtue graced ?  
Lilæus, that from chiefs renown'd in war  
His high-descended lineage traced ?  
Where rears Sebalces his crown-circled head ? 995  
Where Tharybis to battles bred,  
Artembares, Hystæchmes bold,  
Memphis, Masistres sheath'd in gold ?

XER. Wretch that I am ! These on the abhorred  
town

Ogygian Athens, roll'd their glowing eyes 1000  
 Indignant; but at once in the fierce shock  
 Of battle fell, dash'd breathless on the ground.

## CHORUS.

There does the son of Batanochus lie,  
 Through whose rich veins the unsullied blood  
 Of Susamus, down from the lineage high 1005  
 Of noble Mygabatas flow'd:  
 Alpistus, who with faithful care  
 Number'd the deep'ning files of war,  
 The monarch's eye; on the ensanguined plain  
 Low is the mighty warrior laid? 1010  
 Is great Æbares 'mong the heroes slain,  
 And Partheus number'd with the dead?—  
 Ah me! those bursting groans, deep-charged with  
 wo,  
 The fate of Persia's princes show.

XER. To my grieved memory thy mournful voice,  
 Tuned to the saddest notes of wo, recalls 1016  
 My brave friends lost; and my rent heart returns  
 In dreadful symphony the sorrowing strain.

## CHORUS.

Yet once more shall I ask thee, yet once more,  
 Where is the Mardian Xanthes' might, 1020  
 The daring chief, that from the Pontic shore  
 Led his strong phalanx to the fight?  
 Anchaes where, whose high-raised shield  
 Flamed foremost in the embattled field?  
 Where the high leaders of thy mail-clad horse, 1025  
 Daixis and Arsaces where?  
 Where Cigdagatas and Lythimnas' force,  
 Waving untired his purple spear?

XER. Entomb'd, I saw them in the earth entomb'd;  
 Nor did the rolling car with solemn state 1030  
 Attend their rites: I follow'd: low they lie,

1000 Ogyges was one of the most ancient kings of Attica.

(Ah me, the once great leaders of my host!)  
Low in the earth, without their honours lie.

CHORUS.

O wo, wo, wo! Unutterable wo  
The demons of revenge have spread; 1035  
And Ate from her drear abode below  
Rises to view the horrid deed.

XER. Dismay, and rout, and ruin, ills that wait  
On man's afflicted fortune, sink us down.

CHORUS.

Dismay, and rout, and ruin on us wait, 1040  
And all the vengeful storms of Fate :  
Ill flows on ill, on sorrows sorrows rise ;  
Misfortune leads her baleful train ;  
Before the Ionian squadrons Persia flies,  
Or sinks ingulf'd beneath the main. 1045  
Fall'n, fall'n is her imperial power,  
And conquest on her banners waits no more.

XER. At such a fall, such troops of heroes lost,  
How can my soul but sink in deep despair !  
Cease thy sad strain.

CHO. Is all thy glory lost? 1050

XER. Seest thou these poor remains of my rent  
robes ?

CHO. I see, I see.

XER. And this ill-furnish'd quiver ?

CHO. Wherefore preserved ?

XER. To store my treasured arrows.

CHO. Few, very few.

XER. And few my friendly aids.

CHO. I thought these Grecians shrunk appall'd at  
arms. 1055

XER. No: they are bold and daring: these sad  
eyes

Beheld their violent and deathful deeds.

CHO. The ruin, sayst thou, of thy shattered  
fleet ?

XER. And in the anguish of my soul I rent  
My royal robes.

CHO. Wo, wo!

XER. And more than wo. 1060

CHO. Redoubled, threefold wo!

XER. Disgrace to me,  
But triumph to the foe.

CHO. Are all thy powers  
In ruin crush'd?

XER. No satrap guards me now.

CHO. Thy faithful friends sunk in the roaring  
main.

XER. Weep, weep their loss, and lead me to my  
house; 1065

Answer my grief with grief, an ill return  
Of ills for ills. Yet once more raise that strain  
Lamenting my misfortunes; beat thy breast,  
Strike, heave the groan; awake the Mysian strain  
To notes of loudest wo; rend thy rich robes, 1070  
Pluck up thy beard, tear off thy hoary locks,  
And bathe thine eyes in tears: thus through the  
streets

Solemn and slow with sorrow lead my steps;  
Lead to my house, and wail the fate of Persia.

#### CHORUS.

Yes, once more at thy bidding shall the strain 1075

Pour the deep sorrows of my soul;

The sufferings of my bleeding country plain,

And bid the Mysian measures roll.

Again the voice of wild despair

With thrilling shrieks shall pierce the air; 1080  
For high the god of war his flaming crest

Raised, with the fleet of Greece surrounded,

The haughty arms of Greece with conquest bless'd,

And Persia's withered force confounded,

Dash'd on the dreary beach her heroes slain, 1085  
Or overwhelm'd them in the darken'd main.

END OF ÆSCHYLUS.

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